



# A New Possibility for Confucian Meditation: *An Inquiry into the Yijing*

Suhn-Gyohng YI and Jung-Yeup KIM

## Abstract

Generally, when it comes to Confucian meditation, people think of Neo-Confucian quiet-sitting (jingzhuo 靜坐) or reverent attentiveness (jing 敬). Reverent attentiveness aims to cultivate one's morality in daily life through a dynamic and harmonious interaction of quietude (jing 靜) and activity (dong 動), which is a clear Confucian characteristic. However, this paper argues that Neo-Confucian meditation could be made even more holistic through a method of meditation that incorporates insights from the Yijing 易經 (Book of Changes). That is, Yijing divination can be understood and used to practice a way of meditation through which one can encounter further aspects of the self that Neo-Confucian meditation does not typically address, for example, the subconscious. If Neo-Confucian reverent attentiveness accommodates Yijing meditation and extends itself to the depths of consciousness, Confucian meditation can become more vibrant by more fully encompassing both rationality and spirituality.

**Keywords:** reverent attentiveness, *jing* 敬, *Yijing* 易經, meditation, divination, moral cultivation, Neo-Confucianism, Zhu Xi 朱熹

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\* First author: Suhn-Gyohng YI is a senior researcher in the Institute of Korean Philosophy, Korea National University of Cultural Heritage. E-mail: 67sunflower@naver.com.

Co-author (Second author): Jung-Yeup KIM is an associate professor of philosophy, Kent State University. E-mail: jkim17@kent.edu.

## Introduction

Modern people have been gradually eschewing traditional metaphysics and religion in light of the development of science, the increased emphasis on human rationality, and the flexible personal exploration of the meaning of life. Metaphysics and religion once functioned to explain the meaning of the world and the significance of human existence. However, many contemporary people who have lost faith in this function now have to discover the meaning of their existence by other means. It seems the reason meditation is so popular in modern times may be that it quenches people's thirst for this lost transcendence.<sup>1</sup>

Searching Google Scholar, one can find various types of meditation originating from Buddhist or Christian traditions. However, it is difficult to find forms of meditation with Confucian origins. This is probably because people think of Confucianism as an ethical and political form of thought that is only related to the everyday world with a lack of interest in spirituality or mindfulness.

Though it takes various forms, meditation is widely understood as the idea that by focusing our attention, we can let go of distractions, obsessions, etc., and deepen our insight into our experience of consciousness (Canda 2019, 428).<sup>2</sup> And besides the therapeutic effect of relaxing the mind, meditation includes the purpose of deepening insight into the true self, the nature of consciousness, the nature of reality, and promoting positive well-being and spiritual awakening (Canda 2019, 429).

In the light of the above, it cannot be said that Confucianism is

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1. A study released in 2018 illustrates this phenomenon: "Indeed, some people may reject religion—with its strong connotations of structure, tradition and organization—while still embracing spiritual beliefs. In the United States, for example, nearly half of adults (48%) describe themselves as *both* religious and spiritual, but a substantial—and rising—share of the public (27% in 2017, up from 19% in 2012) call themselves spiritual but not religious" (Pew Research Center 2018, 119).
  2. Canda's definition of meditation is a synthesis of the views of various scholars: Fontana (2003); Fuller (2008); Keefe (2017); Newberg and Newberg (2005); Press and Osterkamp (2006).

indifferent to spirituality. Rather, Confucianism has a different way of understanding it. More specifically, spirituality as understood in Confucianism pertains to realizing transcendence within everyday contexts. For Confucians, spirituality is not cut off from daily routine. To Confucians, people can achieve transcendence through daily routine, and there is no need to sever oneself from daily life in order to enter a transcendent realm. Thus, a way of life following the Confucian concept of spiritual self-cultivation wakens one to a way of life quite different from other conventional methods.

This paper proposes that a careful examination of meditation based on the *Yijing* 易經 can promote an innovative re-invigoration of Confucian meditation. The Cheng Yi 程頤 (1033–1107) and Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200) school of Neo-Confucianism criticized what they considered to be the overemphasis on “quietude” (*jing* 靜) in the meditation of Daoism and Buddhism. In the context of self-cultivation, they instead emphasized “reverent attentiveness” (*jing* 敬).<sup>3</sup> They consistently emphasized that “reverent attentiveness” should be the essence of cultivating the self.<sup>4</sup> Neo-Confucianism as discussed in this paper refers to the Cheng-Zhu school of

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3. We thank Professor Edward Canda, professor emeritus, University of Kansas, for this translation of *jing* 敬, his help with some proofreading, and sharing his insights concerning translating terms. Reverent attentiveness (*jing* 敬) can be regarded as a sort of mindfulness. But it is not the same as Buddhist mindfulness. Canda explains “*jing*” 敬 in this way and describes that “*Mindfulness* [敬] is attentive unbiased awareness applied to each moment. It establishes the complementarity of stillness and motion in any activity. The practice of quiet-sitting meditation can be valuable to cultivate mindfulness. In this type of meditation, the intention is to let the natural harmonious quality of mind emerge. Force is not used to make anything happen” (Canda 2022, 72).

4. Zhu Xi says that reverent attentiveness (*jing* 敬) is the prime way of self-cultivation, so it should not be halted at any moment (Zhu Xi n.d., 12:85). Yi Hwang 李滉, one of the representative Korean Confucian scholars of the 16th century, explains the meaning of reverent attentiveness in the following passage: “Reverent attentiveness means to see through activity (*dong* 動) and quietude (*jing* 靜) simultaneously, as if one could contemplate one’s own internal state and also learn something externally by doing this. Therefore, it is a way (*dao* 道) that can unite one’s inside and outside. Reverent attentiveness is a way (*dao* 道) one can practice consistently, whether one’s own mind focuses inward or outward” (Yi Hwang 1568).

the Song dynasty. The literature on Confucian meditation has largely centered on the notion of “reverent attentiveness” or “quiet-sitting” (*jing zuo* 靜坐),<sup>5</sup> where the notion of reverent attentiveness has been systematically developed by the Cheng-Zhu school of Neo-Confucianism. Thus, this school will be focused on in this paper. The scholars in this school made it their life mission to establish a theory by which they might overcome Buddhist idealism and Daoist unworldliness. Neo-Confucianism during the Song dynasty was deeply influenced by Buddhism and Daoism, but it considered the Buddhist and Daoist types of meditation as major threats that could cause a breakdown in personal lives and society more broadly (Adler 2008, 60). For example, Neo-Confucians criticized the Daoist method of meditation, which claimed it could gain its practitioner immortality, for leading people down a wrong path by having them deny their nature of eating, drinking, and having sex. Furthermore, Neo-Confucians criticized Daoist meditation for it making one negligent in the maintenance of social relationships. For this reason, Neo-Confucians tried to develop their own way of cultivating mindfulness, which amounted to the aforementioned notion of reverent attentiveness. Furthermore, they explicated the main idea of quiet-sitting in terms of *reverent attentiveness*, as opposed to *quietude*. Consequently, reverent attentiveness is considered the most important form of Confucian meditation to this day. Neo-Confucian meditation exhibits classical Confucian characteristics by emphasizing that the goal of meditation should not be solely to maintain balance of one’s mind while sitting in silence, but also to sustain this state when returning to the dynamism of daily life. The ultimate intent of Confucianism is to determine the optimal way of living one’s life in the here and now. Despite this, it will be argued that the perspective of Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism does not form a fully holistic approach to meditation because of its tendency toward the intellect over spirituality.

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5. Literature in English concerning Neo-Confucian meditation is not plentiful. However, there is an abundance of literature on this issue in Korean, Chinese, and Japanese. According to these studies, the meditation of Neo-Confucianism holds reverent attentiveness and quiet-sitting as its key concepts.

Neo-Confucian scholars divide the mind into two dimensions: a state in which feelings and thoughts have not yet moved (*weifa* 未發), and a state in which they have already moved (*yifa* 已發). Furthermore, they assert that both of these states should be involved in the process of reverent attentiveness. According to them, we are born with spiritual perception (*xuling zhijue* 虛靈知覺), and perceptions of our mind must be awoken both before and after our mind moves. However, although Neo-Confucian reverent attentiveness functions relatively well in a state of the moved mind (*yifa* 已發), it is not efficient for getting in touch with the not-yet-moved mind (*weifa* 未發). This is because since Neo-Confucian meditation often values conscious deliberation, it cannot easily access the area before conscious awareness.

Thus, in light of the above, one question remains: How can we let go of our self-consciousness and enter the depths of our mind to encounter a *spiritual perception* that is not limited to conscious awareness? Answering this is not easy because the reverent attentiveness of Neo-Confucianism of the Song dynasty, to a certain degree, carries some characteristics of intellectualism. It is argued here that *Yijing* meditation, with its spiritual elements, can complement Neo-Confucian meditation and create a method of meditation with distinctly Confucian colors. It is further argued that it is difficult for Neo-Confucianism to instill spiritual energy in its somewhat intellectualized reverent attentiveness without acknowledging the more spiritual facet of the *Yijing*, which Neo-Confucians have tended to overlook. This is what we mean by asserting *Yijing* meditation offers a new possibility for Confucian meditation that goes beyond Neo-Confucian meditation.

*Yijing* meditation possesses a method of accessing deep spiritual subconsciousness. This method is, in a word, “divination” (*zhan* 占). It is argued that the whole process related to divination, that is, preparing, divining, interpreting, and applying, can be regarded as a process of meditation. In particular, the process of producing “hexagrams” (*gua* 卦) while counting “yarrow-stalks” (milfoil, *shicao* 蓍草)<sup>6</sup> is the process of letting

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6. Yarrow-stalk (milfoil, *shicao* 蓍草) is a plant used to make divination stalks. *Yijing* divination uses a process of counting fifty thin stalks by fours, symbolizing the cycle of the

go of one's mind, focusing on questions with no bias, and experiencing an awareness of being one with Heaven and Earth. Thus, the purpose of *Yijing* divination is not simply that of fortunetelling; rather, it is a process of examining one's present condition within the universe in which one exists. It follows the same reasoning as one of the creators of the *Yijing*, namely, Kongzi 孔子 (Confucius), who suggested divination as one of the four applications of the *Yijing*.<sup>7</sup>

The *Yijing* was originally conceived as a divine religious text, which functioned to foretell specific issues in life. Yet it also contains *yin-yang* 陰陽 philosophy, which provides more general insights concerning life based upon a comprehensive understanding of the order of the world obtained through a holistic observation of nature. Thus, the *Yijing* simultaneously expresses spiritual and rational aspects of the human experience. That is, the *Yijing* considers spiritual awareness as important as cerebral thinking. Through this, it promotes a method of helping people become holistically aware of the relationship between the world and one's own life as a human being. For example, the *Yijing* advances two methods of becoming aware of the world, *guwu jinshen* 鼓舞盡神 (developing the spirit as if through drumming and dancing),<sup>8</sup> and *qiongli jinxing* 窮理盡性 (thinking through the order of the outer world to the end, and exploring the law of its nature to the deepest core).<sup>9</sup> The former method attempts to unite the outer world and inner awareness through cultivating the subject's spiritual experience, while the latter implies that subject and object can converge in a unified principle through rational reflection concerning the outer world.

*Yijing* meditation is not totally different from Neo-Confucian

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four seasons. Further details of this process will be provided below.

7. *Yijing*, "The Great Appendices" (*Xicizhuan* 繫辭傳), Part 1, Chapter 10, states that the Sage suggested four applications for the *Yijing*: 1. to understand the text by words and explanation; 2. to figure out the flow of change; 3. to realize that everything in the world can be associated with the image (*xiang* 象) of the eight trigrams; 4. to reflect on the results of divination. These applications can be summed up as, words (*ci* 辭), change (*bian* 變), image (*xiang* 象), and divination (*zhan* 占).
8. *Yijing*, "The Great Appendices" (*Xicizhuan* 繫辭傳), Part 1, Chapter 12.
9. *Yijing*, "Treatise of Remarks on the Trigrams" (*Shuoguzhuan* 說卦傳), Chapter 1.

methodology because reverent attentiveness remains its central idea.<sup>10</sup> However, from the perspective of *Yijing* meditation, reverent attentiveness extends deep into the subconscious and thus becomes a more holistic approach to meditation which encompasses the conscious and subconscious aspects of ourselves. What follows is an investigation of the purpose of *Yijing* meditation, its theoretical structure, its concrete procedures, and how to apply it to one's daily routine. Through this inquiry, we conclude that *Yijing* meditation can add depth and a more holistic quality to Confucian meditation.

### **The Purpose of *Yijing* Meditation: Self-cultivation through Balancing and Harmonizing Rationality and Spirituality**

The purpose of *Yijing* meditation can be divided into two aspects: the particular aspect and the general aspect. The particular aspect can help each person to mature daily with their rational and spiritual aspects of life balanced in harmony. In the general aspect, meditation becomes a useful method for achieving the fundamental goal of the *Yijing*.

Let us begin with the particular aspect. In contemporary times, in our daily routine, we decide or manage to do things largely through rationality. Yet, there are times we become frustrated with our daily problems, which may cause psychological and mental disturbances, and we may find ourselves unable to resolve these problems through rational thought. It is here that *Yijing* meditation can provide a spiritual methodology, in contrast to a rational one, which will allow us to discover new perspectives on facing and solving daily problems and bring peace to our minds and bodies. What

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10. Reverent attentiveness is deeply related to the *Yijing*'s spirit of life. That is, the *Yijing* places emphasis on *life*. Change per se is life. All living things can maintain their dynamic equilibrium as life by constantly changing moment by moment. However, the life referred to in the *Yijing* is not just biological life, but also a life of moral value. Humans must be reborn as new beings every moment by always striving for their maturity of character. In this respect, reverent attentiveness is an indispensable element of the spirit of life of the *Yijing*.

is unique about *Yijing* meditation is that it accesses and responds to deep insights from our subconsciousness through yarrow-stalk divination (*shicaozhan* 蓍草占). This process draws out and makes us aware of hidden capabilities within us that can provide us with intuitions concerning healing and morality. These intuitions then become the material for further rational reflection. Therefore, the process of divination in *Yijing* meditation is essential for bringing out our hidden potentialities for problem solving.<sup>11</sup>

That is, *Yijing* meditation includes both a spiritual aspect through divination and an aspect of rational reflection on “the hexagram (*gua* 卦) and lines (*yao* 爻)” which are drawn as a result of the divination. Divination is, as a religious and sacred act, the spiritual part of *Yijing* meditation which involves the ritual of preparing for divination and the process of questioning and acting upon symbolic gestures.<sup>12</sup> The rational aspect of *Yijing* meditation is the process of reflecting on “images” (*xiang* 象) and “words” (*ci* 辭) from the “hexagram” (*gua* 卦) drawn during the previous step. The unique characteristic of the *Yijing* balances these apparent polar opposites in terms

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11. C. G. Jung argues that the principle of *Yijing* divination cannot be approached from the law of causality, but must be explained through *synchronicity*, a notion he coined. That is, the state of inner mind and that of the outside have an acausal coincidence, as well as a semantic correspondence. Progoff summarizes Jung’s view of *Yijing* divination as follows: “This is the principle that underlies the use of the *I Ching* [*Yijing*]. It calls upon two separate events occurring at a single moment and draws great meaning from them, even though there is no cause-and-effect relationship between the events. Of the two events, one is the situation at a given moment in a person’s life. The second event is the act of throwing the coins (or the yarrow stalks), with the consequent reading of the *I Ching* text that the pattern of the coins calls up. Neither event has any apparent causal influence on the other. And yet almost invariably the readings of the text have an uncanny relevance for the life of the person” (Progoff 1973, 23–24). Jung was worried about the misuse of the *Yijing* and advised about its correct usage thusly: “The *I Ching* does not offer itself with proofs and results; it does not vaunt itself, nor is it easy to approach. Like a part of nature, it waits until it is discovered. It offers neither facts nor power, but for lovers of self-knowledge, of wisdom-if there be such-it seems to be the right book” (Jung 1969, 607–608).

12. *Yijing* divination recreates the meaning of the universe, which is divided into Heaven, Earth, humans, and the significance of their unity through the symbolic gesture of dividing and counting yarrow-stalks. Further details concerning this procedure will be provided below.

of *yin* and *yang*. It pursues the golden mean by uniting spirituality and rationality.

It must be understood that the reason it is said that the *Yijing* was *made* not just *written* is because, in addition to the text of the *Yijing*, it includes yarrow-stalk divination. The text plays the role of an interpretative guide to help judge the results produced from the yarrow-stalk divination.<sup>13</sup> In the *Yijing*, it is said that the reason the Sage created the text was “because he had concerns for the people in the world” (*youhuan yishi* 憂患意識).<sup>14</sup> These concerns range from the concrete and ordinary to the philosophical and religious. The most common concern is about how people’s endeavors might be successful and correct in this constantly changing world. Everything is changing; nothing is constant except change. According to the *Yijing*, one’s life can be in jeopardy even during calm and placid times if one lives too much at ease. Conversely, one can restore calmness and placidity in troubled times. Since people always live in the present, which is perpetually changing, they need at all times to approach every single changing moment with “concern” (*juyi zhongshi* 懼以終始) in order to live a “faultless” (*qiyaowujiu* 其要无咎) life.<sup>15</sup> In the *Yijing*, the *words* (*ci* 辭), *images* (*xiang* 象), and *divination* (*zhan* 占) which the hexagrams and lines show are a set of implements to help ensure nothing goes wrong with a person or their endeavors. One’s self-cultivation is needed in order to be faultless in dealing with all of one’s own tasks. The text of the *Yijing* states that its purpose is to “clean one’s mind” (*xixin* 洗心), and, furthermore, “to be concerned with

13. People can simply read the text of the *Yijing*, much like reading the *Analects* of Confucius or the *Mencius*. However, in the case of the *Yijing*, it is better to read it with yarrow-stalk divination.

14. *Yijing*, “The Great Appendices” (*Xicizhuan* 繫辭傳), Part 2, Chapter 7: 作易者其有憂患乎.

15. The following six English translations of the *Yijing* were consulted for this paper: Wilhelm et al. (1967); Legge (1964); Lynn (1994); Rutt (1996); Redmond (2017); and Adler (2019). English passages from the *Yijing* in this study are taken primarily from the translations of Wilhelm and Legge. Sometimes the translation of Adler is used. The remaining books have been consulted mostly for reference. At times the translation has been modified to make the terms clearer in meaning based on the original classical Chinese text. The inherent terms of the *Yijing*, such as the names of hexagrams, have been Romanized using Hanyu pinyin 漢語拼音.

other people's success and failure as if they were one's own" (*jixiong* 吉凶, *yumintonghuan* 與民同患)<sup>16</sup>

Next, the general purpose of *Yijing* meditation, a method by which one can realize the fundamental goal of the *Yijing*, will be explained. The ultimate concern of the authors of the *Yijing* is to learn how to live a life that adapts to the discovery of one's true nature and reason for existence. The *Yijing* says that its purpose is to help one "follow one's own nature and heavenly order."<sup>17</sup> It also says that the reason yarrow-stalk divination was devised was to give people a way to live by accepting and following the "way" (*dao* 道) and "virtue" (*de* 德). Through yarrow-stalk divination and the text of the *Yijing*, we can "thoroughly seek the principle of the outer world," and "examine the deepest core of our inner nature."<sup>18</sup> *Yijing* meditation leads us to reflect on yarrow-stalk divination and on the text of the *Yijing*. By doing so, we can encounter our own nature and heavenly principle, which we usually cannot easily approach, and we can also gain insights concerning ways and processes of further realizing our nature and the heavenly principle in daily life.

An individual and the whole world are connected from the perspective of the *Yijing* because the "heavenly principle" (*tianli* 天理) runs through both the natures of humans and non-human entities. Therefore, one can find oneself in relationships with others because one and others are not separated. "Oneself" is not an isolated being but exists in universal solidarity with other lives. As such, the purpose of *Yijing* meditation is not only to achieve peace of body and mind for oneself, but also to realize a sense of solidarity of compassion toward others' grief (*yumin tonghuan* 與民同患) and, eventually, to feel universal solidarity with others by being in accord

16. *Yijing*, "The Great Appendices" (*Xicizhuan* 繫辭傳), Part 1, Chapter 11.

17. The *Yijing*, "Treatise of Remarks on the Trigrams" (*Shuoguazhuan* 說卦傳), Chapter 1.

18. "They put themselves in accord with the *dao* 道 and virtue (*de* 德), and in conformity with this laid down the order of what is right. By 'thinking through the order of the outer world to the end' (*qiongli* 窮理), and by 'exploring the law of their nature to the deepest core' (*jinxing* 盡性) they arrived at 'what was appointed for it by heaven' (*ming* 命)." *Yijing*, "Treatise of Remarks on the Trigrams" (*Shuoguazhuan* 說卦傳), Chapter 1 (modified from the translations of Legge [1964] and Wilhelm, et al. [1967]).

with the order of their nature, which is also the order of heaven (*shunxingmingzhili* 順性命之理).

### Key Concepts of *Yijing* Meditation: *Cheng* 誠 and *Wu* 無

This section investigates the key concepts that underlie *Yijing* meditation, namely, nothingness (*wu* 無) and integrity (*cheng* 誠). How can an individual's subconscious correspond to an external situation and by doing so yield answers concerning how to deal with this situation through yarrow-stalk divination? Also, how can the result of the divination be revealed through the hexagrams and lines? The *Yijing* has its own sound reasoning and narration, which is based on the unique understanding of the notion of *wu* 無 in Confucianism. Usually *wu* 無 means “nothing.” However, in Confucianism *wu* does not mean literally nothing, i.e., the absence of anything. Rather, *wu* 無 is understood as that which is *truly sincere* and without a grain of self-interest. Thus, that King Shun 舜 “ruled with non-action” (*wuwei* 無爲)<sup>19</sup> implies that the actions of King Shun were truly sincere, not that he did nothing. The notions of “no thought” (*wusi* 無思) or “no action” (*wuwei* 無爲) depict the way of Heaven. Also, Heaven is described through the notions of “heavenly principle” (*tianli* 天理), “truthful principle” (*shili* 實理), and “integrity” (*cheng* 誠). The principle of correspondence in *Yijing* divination is also based on this philosophy. A passage from the *Yijing* explains the principle of *Yijing* meditation as follows:

The Yi [易] is without thought and without action; silent and unmoving, when stimulated it connects all circumstances under Heaven. If it were not the most spiritual thing under Heaven, how could we participate in this?<sup>20</sup>

19. *Analects* (*Lunyu* 論語) 15, “Weilinggong” 衛靈公, Chapter 5: 子曰，無爲而治者其舜也與。

20. “This” here implies the divine in the *Yijing*. *Yijing*, “The Great Appendices” (*Xicizhuan* 繫辭傳), Part 1, Chapter 10: 易无思也，无爲也，寂然不動，感而遂通天下之故。非天下之至神，其孰能與於此。 Translation from (Adler 2019, 279).

This explains how the *Yijing* corresponds to the situation of the inquisitor and opens the way to pass through an obstacle. The “*yi*” 易, that is, the *Yijing*, possesses an innate state of *no thought*, and *no action*, so it remains calm. Because of this, when any elements are stimulated, it can correspond to each situation properly (Shin 2017, 161). The following is Zhu Xi’s explanation of the above text:

“*Yi* [易]” refers to the milfoil and hexagrams. “Without thought and without action” speaks of it having no mind. “Silence” is the substance of stimulation. “Stimulating” and “penetrating” are the function of silence. The mystery of the human mind, in its activity and stillness, is also like this.<sup>21</sup>

Divination is an interaction between “*yi*” 易 and the diviner. Yarrow-stalks and hexagrams naturally have no preconceptions. Likewise, when one maintains inner peace without any prejudice, one can correspond to *yi*. Just as a mirror reflects whatever looks into the mirror, *yi* shows the path to the diviner’s question.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, neither “no thought” nor “no action” is to be understood as absolute *nothingness* (*wu* 無). There is still heavenly principle (*tianli* 天理) there. “A mirror is always shining whether it reflects a thing or not.”<sup>23</sup>

“No thought and no action” (*wusi wuwei* 无思无爲) indicates “heavenly principle” without the intervention of artificial manipulation, and does not

21. Zhu Xi, *Zhouyi benyi* 周易本義 (Original Meaning of the *Yijing*), “Commentary on ‘The Great Appendices’” (*Xicizhuan* 繫辭傳), Part 1, Chapter 11: 易, 指蓍卦。无思无爲, 言其无心也。寂然者, 感之體, 感通者, 寂之用, 人心之妙, 其動靜亦如此。 Translation from Adler (2019, 279).

22. In *Zen’s Interpretation of Yijing* (*Zhouyi chanjie* 周易禪解) of Zhi Xu 智旭 (1599–1655), “no thought” (*wusi* 無思) and “no action” (*wuwei* 無爲) are described as follows: “There is no artificial manipulation in *yi* 易 itself. So *yi* 易 is without thought and without action; silent and unmoving when stimulated, it penetrates all circumstances under heaven.” Zhi Xu notes that the reason meaningful results can be produced is because the divinator’s own mind fits into *no thought* (*wusi* 無思) and *no action* (*wuwei* 無爲) (Zhi, 2007, 809).

23. Lu Dalin 呂大臨, *Zhouyi chuanyi daquan* 周易傳義大全 (A Collection of Comments on the Book of Changes by Cheng Yi, Zhu Xi and Others), “Commentary on ‘The Great Appendices’” (*Xicizhuan* 繫辭傳), Part 1, Chapter 11.

indicate “nothingness” (*wu* 無), “emptiness” (*kong* 空), or “voidness” (*xu* 虛). Thus, they use the term “authentic principle” (*shili* 實理) to express “heavenly principle.” “Heavenly principle” is not just emptiness, but full of “something sincere and true” (*zhenshi wuwang* 真實无妄).<sup>24</sup> “Heavenly principle” is not just objective and speculative; it is a principle of living life and its essence is silent and unmoving (*jiran budong* 寂然不動). But when a situation does occur, “heavenly principle” corresponds and reveals its vitality.

*Yijing* meditation surpasses the limitations of “reverent attentiveness” (*jing* 敬) in Neo-Confucianism. Ironically, however, Neo-Confucianism already possesses an established theory that can embrace *Yijing* meditation; it just has not been associated with this meditation. Most Neo-Confucian scholars did not look upon *Yijing* divination positively, with the exception of those of the Cheng-Zhu school. Even Zhu Xi himself, who discovered new meaning in *Yijing* divination and strived to establish a method to perform it correctly, did not understand it from the perspective of “reverent attentiveness.”

The philosophical foundation of *Yijing* meditation is further supported by the philosophy of the *Doctrine of the Mean* (*Zhongyong* 中庸), which has been called the spiritual twin of the *Yijing*. According to the *Doctrine of the Mean*, “heavenly principle” as a principle of living life is expressed as “integrity” (*cheng* 誠). The reason the entire universe can correspond like a network is because all beings’ lives are based on integrity. Thus, the *Doctrine of the Mean* asserts: “Integrity is the beginning and end of everything” (*chengzhewu zhi zhongshi* 誠者物之終始) and “Without integrity, there can be no beings” (*bucheng wuwu* 不誠無物).<sup>25</sup> The essence of the universe is integrity.

Integrity is important because it is the driving force that is able to correspond and penetrate *Yijing* meditation. In one commentary on the *Yijing* it is said, “If it were not the most divine thing under Heaven, how

24. See Zhu Xi’s commentary in *Collected Commentaries on the Doctrine of the Mean* (*Zhongyong jizhu* 中庸集註), edited by Zhu Xi, Chapter 20.

25. See *Doctrine of the Mean*, Chapter 25. Modified from the translation of Legge (2016, 35).

could we participate in this?”<sup>26</sup> The reason the most divine (*zhishen* 至神) and the diviner can correspond is because the *yi* 易 and the diviner correspond with “integrity.” In the *Doctrine of the Mean* it is also expressed that it is *integrity* alone that makes this mysterious and spiritual correspondence possible: “The ability to foreknow is a characteristic of utmost integrity...It is seen in yarrow-stalk and tortoise divination...so utmost integrity is like a divine being.”<sup>27</sup>

In the last part of the above quotation, the statement that “utmost integrity is like a ‘divine being’” (*shen* 神) can be expressed in another way as follows: “a divine being forms itself with the utmost integrity.” In a more direct way, it can be interpreted as “one cannot see a divine being removed from utmost integrity.” The following comment by Yi I 李珥 (1536–1584) is to this point: “The divine exists as long as there is integrity, and, where there is no integrity, there can be no divine being.”<sup>28</sup> If this is so, the condition for the realization of correspondence in the end comes down to a matter of human virtue. That is, it is a matter of how one keeps one’s nature and embodies it because the content of one’s nature is *integrity* itself. To keep and maintain integrity, the essence of one’s being, is to realize one’s nature. How well yarrow-stalk divination corresponds to the question depends on how well the diviner has developed their integrity. The *Doctrine of the Mean* reads, “It is only he who is possessed of the most complete integrity that can exist under heaven, who can give its full development to his nature.”<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, it also reads “Only with perfect virtue can the perfect path, for its entire course, be made fact.”<sup>30</sup> One who has “the most complete integrity,” or “perfect virtue,” is called a sage. According to the *Doctrine of the Mean*,

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26. See footnote 22.

27. *Doctrine of the Mean*, Chapter 24. Modified from the translation of Legge (2016, 35).

28. Yi I, *Yulgok jeonso* 栗谷全書 (Collected Works of Yulgok Yi I Supplemented with Previously Missing Materials), Volume 6: “Seongchaek” 誠策 (Answer Sheet to the State Examination Questions on the Subject of Integrity).

29. *Doctrine of the Mean*, Chapter 22. Modified from translation of Legge. The translation of Legge (2016, 33) is as follows: “It is only he who is possessed of the most complete sincerity that can exist under heaven, who can give its full development to his nature.”

30. *Doctrine of the Mean*, Chapter 27.

since a sage is an ideal being who has become one with integrity, which is the way of Heaven, a sage can naturally realize the way of Heaven without making any effort or contemplation. The *Doctrine of the Mean* describes the nature of the sage as integrity itself and defines “making integrity” (*chengzhi* 誠之) as the act of ordinary people striving to achieve integrity. Confucianism expounds the view that ordinary people can also achieve integrity through the effort of *realizing integrity* because sages and normal people share innate integrity as a common essence of their being. The *Doctrine of the Mean* states that the specific method of making integrity is “to choose what is good and to hold it firmly” (*zeshan er guzhi* 擇善而固執).<sup>31</sup>

This is the aspect of “reverent attentiveness” that Neo-Confucianism emphasizes so heavily. “Making integrity” and “reverent attentiveness” are expressed differently, but they have the same ultimate goal—to achieve integrity. *Yijing* meditation is an essential procedure that involves realizing integrity by means of making integrity and practicing reverent attentiveness.

### The Content of *Yijing* Meditation and its Methods

The process of *Yijing* meditation has three steps, and these steps can also be understood as constituting the process of the *Yijing* form of reverent attentiveness. The first step is to produce a hexagram (*gua* 卦) and lines (*yao* 爻) that correspond to a particular question through yarrow-stalk divination. The second step is to interpret the “words” (*ci* 辭) and “images” (*xiang* 象) contained within the hexagram and lines, and to engage the interpretations with one’s situation and reflect upon them. The third step is to apply the insights gained from such reflection to one’s own life and make appropriate changes to one’s life.

Let us examine the first step of *Yijing* meditation, that is, the process of

31. *Doctrine of the Mean*, Chapter 20. See Legge (2016, 31). Modified translation from Legge is as follows: “‘Integrity’ is the way of Heaven. ‘Making Integrity’ is the way of man. He who possesses integrity is he who, without an effort, hits what is right, and apprehends, without the exercise of thought; -he is the sage who naturally and easily embodies the right way. He who attains to integrity is he who chooses what is good, and firmly holds it fast.”

divination. In the beginning, as one prepares to consult the *Yijing* by bathing, getting dressed, burning incense, and achieving a calm state, one is able to let go of one's selfish desires. By removing oneself from insincere thoughts through this ritual of preparation, one can enter into an experiential process that will allow one to join the flow of the universe. For divination, fifty thin sticks 20–30 cm in length will be needed. While holding the fifty sticks, one is taken out and set apart. This one stick symbolizes the *taiji* 太極, which is the ultimate principle of the universe. The first step of separating one stalk out of a set of fifty yarrow-stalks symbolizes the state of no thought (*wusi* 无思) and no action (*wuwei* 无爲) of the great ultimate (*taiji* 太極). Dividing forty-nine sticks into both hands in an undeliberate way symbolizes the division of Heaven and Earth. The drawing out of one of the stalks from the Earth pile and placing it between the fingers of the left hand symbolizes a human being. This stage also symbolizes that the principle of the universe (*taiji* 太極) is embodied in the transactions amongst Heaven, Earth, and human beings. The next step, that is, counting out four-stalk groups from the piles in the left hand and the right hand respectively in turns, and putting the remaining stalks between the fingers in the left hand, symbolizes the cycle of the four seasons.<sup>32</sup>

Done in the above way, the divination process lasts twenty minutes. During this process, the questioner finds the answer they are searching for through the experience of entering into the movement of Heaven, Earth, and the universe. The hexagram and lines that emerge from this process are considered to be the result of one's own nature, which is hidden in one's deep

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32. Further details of divination are omitted. The principle underlying divination is as follows. The process of divination expresses the change of *yin-yang* 陰陽 as represented by the four movements of old *yang*, old *yin*, young *yang*, young *yin*. These "four images" (*sixiang* 四象) of *yin-yang* reaction explain the pattern of cosmic change. Young *yang* grows into old *yang*, old *yang* retreats into young *yin*, young *yin* grows into old *yin*, and old *yin* retreats into young *yang*, which repeats as a cycle. In the *Yijing*, it is thought that a process of movement reaches its limit then turns to the opposite direction. The characteristics of old *yang* and old *yin* are very clear because they have reached the limit, but at the same time it implies they are about to turn into the opposite aspect. Yarrow-stalk divination reveals where in this cycle of *yin-yang* the questioner is situated by reflecting on the hexagram and lines that result from divination.

spiritual subconsciousness and corresponds to the principle of the universe (*taiji* 太極). Through the divination process, one can see something that has not been seen before and gain insight into an immediate situation. The premise of *Yijing* divination is that it is supposed to be done with a reverential mind and pure intention.

As such, *Yijing* divination is not merely a form of fatalistic fortune telling, but is a method of meditation and self-cultivation. It can be said that divination is akin to the process of reverent attentiveness, which Neo-Confucian meditation pursues. While *Yijing* meditation is not different from Neo-Confucian reverent attentiveness, it also extends to the subconscious part of the mind. Yi Hwang 李滉 (1501–1570), one of the representative Korean Confucian scholars of the 16th century, argues that one must try to make reverent attentiveness become the owner of one's mind so that other things cannot come in and feign to be the owner. He also explains that the notion of "reverent attentiveness" is "to place goodness at the center of the mind and focus on it without moving around" (*zhuyi wudi* 主一無適) or to be "always awakened" (*changxingxing* 常惺惺). He points out that reverent attentiveness should be practiced not only in the conscious part of the mind but also deep within the mind, which cannot be seen or heard.<sup>33</sup> Only when one consults the *Yijing* with the right attitude can one's inner spiritual perception correspond to the outer energies of Heaven, Earth, Nature and yield proper insights in the hexagram and lines. According to *Yijing* thought, the answer to one's question comes as the result of properly directing one's own innate foresight and moral nature. Thus, yarrow-stalk divination can function as a way to encounter the full depth and width of one's awareness.

The second step of *Yijing* meditation is to interpret and reflect on the images (*xiang* 象) and words (*ci* 辭) of the hexagram and the lines drawn from yarrow-stalk divination. This process is similar to Neo-Confucian reverent attentiveness. Yet, a distinctive feature of the *Yijing* is that it provides

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33. See footnote 5. Yi Hwang did not directly mention *Yijing* divination as a method of reverent attentiveness, but he highly regarded *Yijing* divination and studied it deeply. He says that reverent attentiveness is a passage toward encountering the "holy divine being" (*shangdi* 上帝).

one with an opportunity to grow in character by helping the questioner view a problem from a perspective they had not previously considered by becoming in touch with the subconscious. It must be noted here that Confucian meditation is not merely a type of meditative sitting in silence. A characteristic of Neo-Confucian meditation is that through it one can remain calm in mind even while moving/working.<sup>34</sup> Keeping one's mind calm whether moving/working or not is reverent attentiveness. According to Zhu Xi:

When there is no work to do, reverent attentiveness is inside the mind. When there is work to do, it is inside the work. I should maintain reverent attentiveness seamlessly, whether there is work or not. A learner must know that finding how to achieve benevolence (*ren* 仁) is keeping reverent attentiveness in daily life.<sup>35</sup>

*Yijing* meditation overlaps with Neo-Confucian reverent attentiveness as it is defined above. That is, in the end, they share the common purpose of realizing benevolence (*ren* 仁) in one's circumstances, which is a Confucian teaching, by maintaining calmness and truthfulness in one's mind before and after selfish feelings and thoughts have encroached upon it. This is a common element between neo-Confucian and *Yijing* meditation. However, the reverent attentiveness of Neo-Confucianism leans to the side of rational reflection in the conscious dimension, while *Yijing* meditation helps to fulfill both our rational and spiritual lives by bringing the deeply subconscious into the conscious realm. In other words, it can be said that the reverent attentiveness of Neo-Confucianism does not include *Yijing* meditation, but *Yijing* meditation includes Neo-Confucian reverent attentiveness. As mentioned above, the *Yijing* can be considered as both *guwu jinshen* 鼓舞盡神 (developing the spirit as if by drumming and dancing) and *qiongli jinxing* 窮理盡性 (thinking through the order of the outer world to the end, and

34. *Collected Conversations of Zhu Xi (Zhuzi yulei 朱子語類)*, 12:97, "Maintain and Preserve Equilibrium" (*Cishou* 持守).

35. *Collected Conversations of Zhu Xi (Zhuzi yulei 朱子語類)*, 12:116, "Maintain and Preserve Equilibrium" (*Cishou* 持守).

exploring the law of its nature to the deepest core). Our lives will be more vibrant when both aspects are combined. The ultimate goal of *Yijing* meditation is to change our lives by applying the insights gained through the divination process to our daily routines.

The third and final step involves interpreting one's present situation from a different perspective and applying this new perspective to one's daily life. For example, if one is having a difficult time in one's current job, one seeks answers concerning the question of whether to change jobs through the process of *Yijing* meditation. What matters here is not obtaining a yes or no answer. Rather, the process of interpreting the hexagrams and lines provides one the opportunity to reflect upon one's self, and this is what truly constitutes consulting the *Yijing* to resolve problems in daily life. In other words, this meditative process gives one the opportunity to rethink the meaning and prospects of one's current job from a perspective never before considered. The first step brings out potentialities hidden in the subconscious, and the second step involves rational reflection. In the third step, through such reflection, one can reconstruct the narrative concerning one's situation in a manner different from how one had previously thought, and apply this new narrative to the everyday, and in doing so, make one's daily life more positive. In the next section, further insights obtainable from *Yijing* meditation on how to best live our lives in the everyday will be inquired into.

### ***Yijing* Meditation and Daily Life**

In light of the above, *Yijing* meditation, in the end, is best understood as a cultivation theory within daily life. That is, *Yijing* meditation not only aims to create personal peace within the mind, but also to fulfill our moral character in the everyday. This is in line with the intentions of Confucian cultivation theory. The purpose of meditation is to arrive at the unperturbed "substance" (*benti* 本體) of the mind and then return to active everyday life. Therefore, one should not think of quietude (*jing* 靜) as the ultimate value. Rather, one should always aim to move forward to activity through quietude.

As the dynamic processes of activity transforming to quietude and quietude changing back into activity is repeated, nothing remains stagnant, and there is always a proper meaning and way to act in every circumstance. This is the common fundamental theme of all Confucian meditation, not only *Yijing* meditation. This is because Confucian meditation is based on the *yin-yang* 陰陽 dialectic of the *Yijing*.<sup>36</sup> The interpretation by Confucian scholars of the *gen* 艮 hexagram from the *Yijing* clearly shows their understanding of the relation between activity and quietude. The *gen* hexagram symbolizes a mountain, which signifies calmness or cessation.<sup>37</sup> The following annotation by Cheng Yi 程頤 (1033–1107) on the *gen* hexagram states: “Motion and calmness are each other’s causes. When motion happens, there comes calmness, when calmness happens, there comes motion.”<sup>38</sup> Quiet-sitting (*jing zuo* 靜坐) should be practiced insofar as it is a precursor to motion. The meaning of the *gen* hexagram, cessation or calmness, is not to cease moving, but to keep one’s mind tranquil and calm while acting.

The results of *Yijing* divination are grouped into four types: fortune or success (*ji* 吉); misfortune or failure (*xiong* 凶); regret (*hui* 悔); and occasion for regret (*lin* 吝). Among these, fortune (*ji* 吉) makes up just a quarter. The remainders are misfortune, regret, and occasion for regret. This seems to reflect real life. In life, most of our time is spent reaching for success rather than achieving it. Most of the time we are frustrated at a series of failures and undesirable fates, regretting our own choices or actions, and feeling sad for not being able to do as we wanted. Incidentally, there is a phrase very often seen in the results of *Yijing* divination that does not relate to the above four types: “no cause for blame” (*wujiu* 无咎). There are many proverbs from

36. For instance, in “The Great Appendixes” (*Xicizhuan* 繫辭傳) of the *Yijing*, it is written, “When the inchworm coils itself up, it thereby straightens again.” The interaction of *yin* 陰 and *yang* 陽, by repeatedly folding and unfolding, is not a becalmed cycle but an active reaction to a world which is changing all the time.

37. The shape of the *gen* 艮 trigram is . This denotes going forward into open land but meeting a mountain and stopping. For this reason, the *gen* trigram and hexagram symbolizes cessation, holding, or calm.

38. Cheng Yi’s commentary on the 52nd *gen* 艮 hexagram can be found in Cheng Yi, *Zhouyi chuanyi daquan* 周易傳義大全 (A Collection of Comments on the Book of Changes by Cheng Yi, Zhu Xi and Others).

the *Yijing* that allude to this, such as: “Try your best and you have no cause for blame, even though the situation is rocky”; “If you hurry, you have no cause for blame”; “They have no cause for blame since they trust each other”; “If you make a decision, you have no cause for blame”; “If you have faith and move forward, you have no cause for blame”; “Even though you suffer poor fortune, you have no cause for blame”; “You have no cause for blame because it is fate”; or “Your heel will hurt, but you have no cause for blame.”

This phrase, “no cause for blame” comes up in all cases without any relation to the results. The reason it is important is that although many aspects of “fortune or success,” “misfortune or failure,” “regret,” and “occasion for regret” in life are inalterable, the results of “no cause for blame” can be put forward as a way to deal with these situations. More important than fortune or success, misfortune or failure, regret, and occasion for regret is having no cause for blame in life by maintaining one’s integrity. It reminds us that one of the reasons the Sage made the *Yijing* is that we have “no cause for blame in this life, which is changing every second.”<sup>39</sup>

The aim of *Yijing* meditation is to maintain the balance of a calm mind, accepting and dealing with circumstances peacefully. In this way, we can gain balance in mind and emotions in our daily routines, and can live out our day-to-day existence in peace.

Confucianism always places greatest emphasis on the present and does not consider there to be truth outside of daily life. This does not mean Confucianism lacks interest in spirituality or transcendence. It simply does not accept spirituality or transcendence as something separate from daily life, but rather something within daily life.<sup>40</sup> *Yijing* meditation is ultimately a way to lead our everyday lives in peace, “to console our neighbors’ sorrow and try not to tremble over fortune and misfortune” (*jixiong yumin*

39. *Yijing*, “The Great Appendixes” (*Xicizhuan* 繫辭傳), Part 2, Chapter 11.

40. The concept of *transcendence* that Confucianism pursues is not the movement from the secular (*su* 俗) to a separate realm of the sacred (*sheng* 聖). Rather, the sacred is not divorced from the secular. Therefore, Confucianism is characterized by the notion that ordinary daily life is the place where one can realize the *sacred*. Herbert Fingarette subtitled his book, *Confucius*, with “The Secular as Sacred” (Fingarette 1972), and this seems appropriate.

*tonghuan* 吉凶與民同患) and to try our best to have “no cause for blame in life” by maintaining integrity.

## Conclusion

More than any other Confucian meditation, *Yijing* meditation carries the possibility of realizing the characteristics of a Confucian life. Confucius, for example, pursued the life of an integrative person, wherein the various aspects of life were all balanced. He pursued a morally mature life, but he did not maintain a stiff attitude. He liked to sing with others, played instruments, and found satisfaction in small pleasures, like bathing in a stream or enjoying a fresh breeze across the plains. When he was teaching his disciples, he led them to obtain humanity and to follow the golden mean in terms of “not too much and not too little” (*wuguo buji* 無過不及). *Yijing* meditation is the right method to embody this kind of Confucian life.

In contemporary scholarship, when it comes to methods of Confucian meditation, it is largely the reverent attentiveness of Neo-Confucianism that is discussed. Yet, this method of meditation was practiced with a primary focus on reflection upon conscious awareness, and can become excessively deliberative. To solve this problem, we need to reformulate reverent attentiveness as a method that harmonizes spirituality and rationality by paying attention to the meditative character of *Yijing* divination. *Yijing* meditation contains both a spiritual side, which encounters the deep subconsciousness, and a rational side, which reflects on the hexagrams and lines, and by doing so, brings the subconsciousness to the surface of consciousness.

Through this process, what we secure from *Yijing* meditation is a way of maintaining balance, and a way to help us avoid bias to one extreme side of our various emotions. This is the golden mean by which we must live, wherein *activity* and *quietude* exist in harmonious balance and stay in the most suitable state following change. In other words, we must live in a manner that sustains dynamic equilibrium (*shizhong* 時中).

The life of the integrative person that Confucius pursued is a life of

realizing benevolence (*ren* 仁). To sustain dynamic equilibrium means to pursue the realization of benevolence in one's life. This realization of benevolence is the end goal of the cultivation theory of the *Yijing*.<sup>41</sup> It is said that the motivation for the Sage in making the *Yijing* was to address the worries and concerns for the world and its people. These worries and concerns are the manifestations of "compassion" (*cheyin zhi xin* 惻隱之心). That is, one concerns oneself with others' endeavors as if they were one's own, whether they are good or bad. The *Yijing* shows us that life, if it follows the order of Nature and Heaven, is nothing but love for one's fellows. The following passage from the *Yijing* is a fitting end to this inquiry:

The sage rejoices in Heaven and understand its decree; therefore the sage does not worry. One rests in one's own present position, and cherishes the spirit of generous benevolence, and; hence the sage can love without reserve.<sup>42</sup>

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41. Han Ja-kyung argues that Buddhist practice and meditation is ultimately completed through the practice of mercy/compassion (*bei* 悲). Buddhist meditation is described as the practice of mercy/compassion wherein one goes beneath the flow of surface consciousness and down to the bottom of the deep mind in order to reach the *empty* (*kong* 空) area in which we all communicate and realize we are all one. One's burden is that of all others and to forgive one another completes the meditation (Han, 2009, 103). I think the possibility exists for a mutual understanding between Buddhist meditation and Confucian meditation, because Confucian meditation from the view of *Yijing* meditation is based on the ontology of integrity and concludes that the worry and concern for the world and its people (*youhuan yishi* 憂患意識) is a manifestation of compassion (*cheyin zhi xin* 惻隱之心). Confucian *compassion* is a mindset whereby one cannot look away from the sufferings of another.

42. *Yijing*, "The Great Appendices" (*Xicizhuan* 繫辭傳), Part 1, Chapter 4. Translation modified from Legge (1964, 354) and Adler (2019, 268).

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