

Learning from "I-Ching" Part 04 1-乾 Heaven - Creative Force

The study of the 64 hexagrams begins with the first 2, 1-Heaven and 2-Earth. It is good to study the details of the hexagram itself and its opposite and then the before and after. This is because I-Ching is about Changes from Position/Situation (hexagram) to Position/Situation.

I-Ching tells us that the Ancient Chinese believed in the creation of the universe by a God who created heaven and the earth. The visible beginning (太极) comes from an invisible (无极). This is very much like the Big Bang theory of the creation of the universe. The visible beginning then multiplies into many other things. First comes heaven (universe) and then comes earth and all the phenomena and living things on earth. There is the creation and there is evolution (change). But there is a beginning, and the beginning has order and rules for living. Scholars divided I-Ching into two major parts. The 1st half of 30-Hexagrams covers the Ways of Heaven(天道 Dao of Heaven) and the 2nd part of 34-hexagrams covers the Ways of Man – How a man should live well with one-another 人伦).

The Chinese Text can be found on many sites, for example, [Chinese Yijing Text is here](#) and click on the icon of lines for the hexagram that you want. A version of the [English I-Ching Text is here](#). A bilingual site of Chinese Classics can be found [here](#) with the I-Ching text [here](#).

The **description** of Heaven begins with 4 keywords.

1. 元 The Original Great Beginning. This beginning is different from the Beginning of the Earth. This is the grand beginning of the creation of the universe. Earth's beginning is the beginning of life on Earth.
2. 亨 The unobstructed smooth flow.
3. 利 Fitting and harmony resulting in gains or increases.
4. 贞 Constant or Eternal Purity and Righteousness or Fairness or Justice.

Moral Values

These are also known as the four moral values of Heaven. Heaven is a great force, energy, the initiator, and the creator. It creates breakthroughs and its influences are far and wide. It brings increases in harmony and is eternally just and right. A wise man, normally translated as a gentleman or superior man, should follow the ways of Heaven in taking the initiative to create value, to impact the lives of others, to bring benefits, and continuously maintain purity, righteousness, and justice. These are the values of successful Entrepreneurs. A key phrase for this hexagram is "*self-motivating unceasing improvement*" (自强不息).

The Stages of Growth

More interesting teachings are conveyed in the six lines (爻) which show the six stages of growth. It applies to personal growth. It also gives us wisdom on how to mentor others. Let's look at them.

Stage 1 Begin-Nine: *Hidden Dragon. Do not act harshly.* 潜龙，勿用

Nine is the number for the solid line Yang and Six is the number for the broken line Yin. At the starting point, *timing* is more important than *positioning*. Hence, the 'begin' in time is used. At the later stage, the highest sixth stage, the description is changed to 'Top' showing *positioning* is more important than the *timing* at the mature stages of development.

Dragon is a symbol of strength and goodness to the Chinese. It is a description conferred upon the kings. This is the very opposite of the Western dragons which are evil and are of devils.

Hidden Dragon here refers to the hidden and undeveloped potentials residing in us. We are the dragon of great potential. But at the start, the potential is not developed and could not be used without due consideration. At this stage, it is best for us to learn and develop as much as we can. We should not rush to undertake tasks beyond our capability to show off. We don't rush to express our opinions. We listen to

others first. When we have better ideas, then we may offer them (better if we are asked). Always wait for others. Nevertheless, when the opportunity opens such as a task that no one wants to take and yet it is within our capability, then we should do it. We can do the things that others don't want to either because they are not glamorous or too tedious.

For the managers, it teaches us that we should try out our young recruits first before assigning tasks of great importance. There is no shortcut to life and development. Only by laying a good foundation could we build skyscrapers. Otherwise, we will lose out, and get fired, in life. Develop our potential first.

Stage 2 Second-Nine. *Dragon shows up in the field. Get mentors (great men) to progress.* 见龙再田，利见大人

In the 2nd stage, hopefully, some of the potential are developed and used. Others can see us doing some good work. At his stage, it is important for us to look for mentors who will guide us and help us to progress further. One could get a few mentors in different areas of our lives e.g. mentor for finance, mentor for behavior, mentor for marriages, etc. Having mentors allow us to learn from others. We learned from Newton that we become a giant by standing on others' shoulders and not stepping on others' toes. We progress, but not by bad-mouthing others (that is not the moral character of Heaven), nor by sabotaging others, but by truly acquiring real skills and capability and networking by seeking out and following mentors. Another interpretation tells us that we should behave like our seniors, having a wider vision, greater depth, and concern for others. We don't fight with our colleagues but help them to succeed instead. Behaving like a senior will one day make us one.

Stage 3 Third-Nine: *During the day, the wise man is actively creating and value-adding. He reflects on his activities at night. He keeps watch over his behavior and hence will not be blamed.* 君子终日乾乾，夕惕若，厉无咎

With greater growth in responsibilities due to promotion from stage 2, we have to not just blindly work hard to create values but also to reflect on our activities. Are we busy for business' sake and putting up a show only? At this stage, we are also attracting the attention and perhaps envy of others. We must be careful in our behavior so that we may be beyond reproach. We do not want to have loose ends for our envious colleagues to use against us. Bible teaches us that while we should be harmless as doves, we should be as wise as the serpents. A Chinese proverb tells us not to have a motive to harm others but at the same time not to lose our guard against the tricks and attacks of others.

Stage 4 Forth-Nine: *Flying Across the Chasms. No regrets.* 或跃在渊，无咎

Success at stage 3 promotes us to stage 4. This is a greater opportunity and success for us. But here lies the great danger – the chasm. We must be able to fly across the chasm to reach stage 5 – the CEO or Division head post. We may fail and drop into the chasm. What shall we do to cross the chasm? Do the things that are taught here – the 4 moral values and as in stage 3 be watchful, be humble, draw support, and so forth (There are other hexagrams that will teach us as well). The most likely thing a typical young up-start or newly promoted manager will do is to show off and start 'commanding' or 'despising' fellow colleagues. Such activities will bring forth our downfall in the chasm.

Stage 5 Fifth-Nine: *Dragon flying in the Sky. Beneficial to have a network with great people.* 飞龙在天，利见大人

This is the highest post of life. Chinese King is described have a 9-5 honor. This is so because the next stage 6 is retirement. Greatness does not just come from oneself but also from association and networking with other great people. At such a high position, life is lonely too. You are not sure whether the good things people do and say to you are true of their hearts. You need to be supported by a good network of great people. There is also the need to get continued support from those people under you, especially your immediate subordinates.

Stage 6 Top-Nine: *Highest Flying Dragon has regrets* 亢龙有悔

The end will eventually come. Here comes the time when one has to retire and hand over duties to the younger ones who replace us. Chinese have a famous saying the scenery of the setting sun is beautiful except that it is already evening. While we are at the top in Stage 5, we should remember and be prepared for the day that we will retire. This is just a warning for us, the reality of life on earth, that there will be a time for us to go. We must then prepare for the 2nd half-life after retirement. You can see why having a network work of great men and mentor is important even at stage 5. They help us to prepare well for the next life we shall be entering into. If we prepared for retirement or change to 2nd life well, there will be no regrets.

For the 1st two hexagrams, there is one more line each. Not sure which stage it is, but could be the ultimate stage. It is called

Ultimate – Use Nine: There are many dragons but without leadership. Good fortune.见群龙无首，吉

This is the ultimate stage where all the dragons are fully matured, righteous men. There is no need for a leader to lead them. They all know how to live peacefully and harmoniously and happily with one another. Those are the true blessings. Heaven is it! Heaven is only heaven if it is filled with righteous people. Heaven is hell if it is filled with immature and evil people.

Another interpretation is that among the 6 dragons of the six stages, there is no one that is the leader. The moral teaching is that leadership is situational – it depends on the time and the situation. There is no one right way of leading.

Lao Zi has the following saying on good leadership:

To lead people, walk beside them ...

As for the best leaders, the people do not notice their existence.

The next best, the people honor and praise.

Next, the people fear;

and the next, the people hate ...

When the best leader's work is done the people say, "We did it ourselves!"

Hope you benefited much from this sharing and begin to apply it to your personal life and journey on this earth.

Live wisely and live without regrets.

A Quick Summary: Be proactive. Be the innovator and the initiator – start a good project. Take the steps to make a better world.

1. *Hidden Dragon:* don't show off – get ready – prepared well. Do it when the time and opportunity are right.
2. *Appearing Dragon:* excel in your work and get mentors
3. *Running Dragon:* be diligent and watchful at the same time
4. *Leaping Dragon:* take a leap to higher ground
5. *Flying Dragon:* soar higher with a network of influential people to correct and guide you
6. *Retiring Dragon:* prepare for retirement or change of career
7. *Parenting Dragon:* self-management of virtuous leaders – developing others.