PARADIGM LOST IN THE INTERPRETATION
OF THE BOOK OF CHANGES

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I. Paradigm theory and the Paradigm of Yi

Etymologically, philosophical use of the word “paradigm” is not new, but has been in use since classical Greece; for instance, Plato used paradeigma to name the model or the pattern in his philosophy as paradeigma (Timaeus 28A). However, it was Thomas Kuhn who first delineated the modern concept of the paradigm in a series of publications since the 1950s, among which The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (hereafter SSR) is the best known and most often quoted. Since then, the impact of the word paradigm, and the extensive debates about it which have prevailed in the field, went far beyond Kuhn’s own expectations. Today, the Kuhnian paradigm is not only a common concept in the study of the philosophy of science, but has also been more broadly deployed across academia. In China, people are already accustomed to defining a certain academic method or a system of thought as a certain paradigm, and the thorough evolution in methodology would always be called a “revolutionary paradigm”.

However, despite extensive discussion, paradigm theory is yet far from a mature concept. One major reason is that Kuhn failed to give a clear and concrete definition to the concept, and this failure led to hot debate about the meaning and function of the paradigm. Within this debate, one essay, “The Nature of a Paradigm” (Masterman 1970), identified 21 possible meanings of “paradigm”. By attempting to interpret Kuhn’s intentions, people have offered various definitions and analyses of the concept of the paradigm. In response, Kuhn presented a series of articles and monologues to further clarify the theory, but in vain. The interpretation of the paradigm seemed to fall into a dilemma: sometimes “paradigm” acquired explanatory definitions as widely separated as “promise” or “community”, and was in later articles replaced by
the new term “disciplinary matrix” (Buchwald & George 1997). However, Kuhn’s perplexity at the nachleben of his concept did not, in any case, impede the broad acceptance of the paradigm as a deployable concept. It seems paradoxical, but it is just this paradox that reveals the key feature of the concept of the paradigm: its methodological priority to all rules.

Firstly, it is the uncertainty in the definition of the paradigm which suggests that it is not a definitive rule, and it is this uncertainty that allowed for such an enormous impact on the history of science. In his SSR, Kuhn described the existence of the concept of the paradigm: “The determination of shared paradigms is not, however, the determination of shared rules…indeed, the existence of a paradigm need not even imply that any full set of rules exists” (43, 44). In Kuhn’s view, “the existence of the paradigm sets the problem to be solved; often the paradigm theory is implicated directly in the design of apparatus able to solve the problem” (27). In this sense, the paradigm can solve problems in the absence of an explicated set of rules, and apparently the latter are derived from certain paradigms, which indicates the fact that the paradigm is more like an orientation—which can transcend all specific rules—and also reversely orient all rules within its own horizon. This is what renders “paradigm” a most promising and attractive term, and what has motivated its rapid adoption across various research horizons. Nevertheless, many scholars still make the mistake of equating the paradigm to a rule, even if unconsciously. Attempts to confine the paradigm within a solid concept can only progress into deviations from the particular elasticity of the Kuhnian concept of the paradigm. Secondly, according to Kuhn, the existence of the paradigm is only expressed within an epistemological system: “The existence of this strong network of commitments—conceptual, theoretical, instrumental, and methodological—is a principal source of the metaphor that relates normal science to puzzle-solving” (Kuhn 42). Apparently, the so-called “existence of this strong network” stressed the integrity of the paradigm. This integrity is not simply one quality among others, but a theoretical system hidden amongst objective practices: “Only as experiment and tentative theory are together articulated to a match does the discovery emerge and the theory become a paradigm” (Kuhn 61). Thus, the paradigm should be an inclusive and open system, rather than a closed and fortified realm, i.e., a rule. The system of rules operating in any given context is strictly exclusive, which bans the interference of anything beyond the criteria authorized by those rules. Therefore, those attempts to make a closed definition and to draw an objective conclusion can only lead to a lost paradigm. Thirdly, while stressing the integrity of the concept of the paradigm, Kuhn also introduced concepts such as “scientific community”, “disciplinary matrix” and so forth, which suggested another unique quality of the paradigm: its acceptability. In his SSR, Kuhn said: “Paradigms gain their status because they are more successful than their competitors in solving a few problems that the group of practitioners has come to recognize as acute” (61). The paradigm will not function as a paradigm unless it is widely accepted by the academic community. And it is at this point that the paradigm differs most significantly from the rule.
Rules are always pragmatic, regardless of reception; rules are not easily amended according to the will of any receivers, and are thus rendered static and lifeless, while the paradigm is more like a "commonwealth", of which the subjective interpretation and reception is of crucial importance to the existence of the paradigm.

It is in this flexible dialogic existence prior to rules that one can find deep connections between the Kuhnian paradigm and the hermeneutical structures of yixue (易学), the branch of traditional Chinese scholarship devoted to interpretation of the Yijing (易经), or Classic of Changes (often still known in the West as the I Ching). The paradigm is not a definite concept but a metaphysical orientation and totality, all laws and practices of which are guided by this orientation, whereas all oriented interpretations could also verify themselves and actively participate into the logical existence of the paradigm: it is this orientation which is deeply similar to the place of yixue in the traditional culture of China. As one of the Six Classics (六经) and one of the Three Obscure Classics (三玄), the Yijing was one of the oldest and most broadly accepted classics in China, dating in its standard form to the mid-first millennium BCE, but with roots in divinatory systems of the second millennium. It established a keynote for the traditional culture of China and helped orient the minds of Chinese scholars for most of the imperial period. The Yijing also possesses an orientation within itself—the life experience of the ancient people of China—which is vividly displayed by an integral system of hexagrams, lines and written judgments. Each hexagram and line has its original meaning, but conclusive judgments about them would always be guided toward the ultimate understanding of the Dao of Yi (or Way of Change, 易道). The system is also an Appellstruktur, which is forever open to interpretation by later receptors, as is stressed in the Yizhuan (易传): "The benevolent see it and call it benevolence and the wise see it and name it wisdom." The Yi (易, the abbreviation of Yijing) is so inclusive that the Siku Quanshu (四库全书, one of the largest and most important imperial collections of classical books in 18th-century China) gave it a preeminent, cosmologically significant place: "The Dao of Yi is so omnipotent that it includes everything." Of course, the correlations mentioned above might still be exterior and mechanical but the paradigm of Yi is evidently a very curious topic; the results of such studies might offer a new approach to a major facet of Chinese intellectual history, but might also potentially enlarge the scope of paradigm theory. The curious study of Cheng Chungying (1935– ) in onto-hermeneutics could be a most typical and vivid example. In his Paradigm of Change in Classical Philosophy of China and On Harmony As Transformation: Paradigms From the Yijing (2009), Cheng offered a systematic narration of the overall paradigm of Yijing interpretation. However, Cheng’s onto-hermeneutical delineation of the paradigm of Yi is so subjective and, even more importantly, his theory overlooked the comparison between the paradigm theory and the yixue, which appealed the necessity of the following discussion in this thesis. Kuhn’s perplexity in defining the paradigm was partly caused by his conceptual mindset; i.e., though he realized the priority of the paradigm over rules, he was still trying to confine it as a solid concept. In this respect, the study of
the Yijing could provide an ideal model for the paradigm theory, and the analysis of the phenomenon of the lost paradigm of Yi might provide solutions to similar mistakes made by Kuhn.

II. The Self-Consciousness of the Paradigm of Yi

In the traditional scholarship of China, Yixue is one of the preeminent forms of classical hermeneutics. The Yijing is comprised of two books: the first being the basic classics (also called the Yijing), which is believed to have been written in the 9th century BCE, and the other, the commentaries of Yi, also called the Yizhuan, believed to have been compiled at least 600 years after the basic classics. In the later scholarship of Yixue, the title of Yijing always refers to the combination of the Yijing and the Yizhuan other than the basic classics alone. In order to avoid terminological confusion, the combination of the two books is very often referred to by the name of Zhouyi (周易), or even simplified as Yi. For the sake of clarity, all appearances of the word Yijing hereafter will refer to the basic classics, while Zhouyi will refer to the two-part standard text including the Yizhuan commentaries, and Yixue to the broader tradition of later scholarship of the Zhouyi.

The text of the Yijing includes the divination symbols, or the “hexagrams” (卦), and the statements correlated to each hexagram and line. Each hexagram is made up of six lines (六爻), each line being either solid “—” or broken “–”, and the interwoven and sequential combination of the lines could therefore depict 2^6, or sixty-four different hexagrams; thus, the total number of individual lines in the whole work would be six times sixty-four, or 384. Each of the hexagrams and lines are appended with a statement, indicating the auspiciousness or misfortune of the hexagram. In this sense, the Yijing had been employed as a guide book for early divination, by which any simultaneous casting of six binary lots could be given a standard interpretation. Later appropriating these primordial divinatory texts for philosophical use, the Yizhuan has 10 sections, generally referred to as the Ten Wings (十翼). For over 20 centuries, the Yizhuan has provided ultimate guidance for the traditional philosophy of China, and millions of scholars were therefore systematically and profoundly influenced by the Yi.

Before the writing of the Yizhuan, there must have been an overall understanding of the basic classics of the Yijing; these prior assumptions are stated in the “Appended Words” (xici 紹説) section of that commentary: “The Yi is equalized as heaven and earth; therefore it is inclusive of the Dao of heaven and earth”; “The reciprocal process of yin (陰) and yang (陽) is called dao (道), the one that enables it to continue to operate is shan (善, human goodness), and the one that brings it to completion is xing (性, human nature)” “Production and reproduction are called yi (change); when it forms xiang (象, image), we call it qian (乾); when it duplicates pattern, we call it kun (坤), knowing the future through the mastery of numbers is referred to as ‘prog-
nostication' (占), keeping step with change is referred to as 'pattern' (事), making the yin and yang unpredictable is 'numinous' (神). Literally, the overall understanding of Yi by the authors of the Yizhuan, which governs the overall orientation of the whole of the Ten Wings, must be conceived as a form of lived experience. In the theoretical horizon of this orientation, mutual categories like “qian,” “kun,” “yuan” (元), “heng” (亨), “li” (利), “zhen” (贞), “yin,” and “yang” and so forth, are not systematically interpreted in the basic classics, but become ontological categories in the Commentaries; i.e., all mutual interrelations between trigrams, hexagrams, solid and broken lines are explained as the reciprocal changes of the categories mentioned above, rendering the understanding of change as the fundamental stratum of the idea in the hermeneutic paradigm of Yi. Oriented by this idea, the Yizhuan offers a systematic interpretation of all the images and numbers in the Yijing, especially the principles of Yi, such as the theories of “time of hexagram” and “sequence of hexagram” that focus on the sequence and position, the theories of “upper and lower” and “inner and outer” that focus on the interplay of images, and the theory of “overriding, undertaking, paralleling and corresponding” (乘, 承, 比, 应) that focuses on the interrelationship between the positions of the six lines in one hexagram. These theories share the same essential features with rules, but they are spontaneously manifested through materialized positions and the relationship of hexagrams and lines, rather than through pure logical elucidation. On the other hand, the idea manifested in any individual hexagram or line never goes beyond the orientation of “production and reproduction called Yi”. For example, in the Tuan-zhuan (豈) commentary, the judgments of the meaning of individual hexagrams all follow the same principle. Among all the judgments, 43 out of 64 are auspicious hexagrams (Wang 114), either because of their auspicious images, such as the tuan of qian: “So great is the origin of qian! The myriad of things are hereby originated, which fill the heaven”; some because of the supposedly virtuous position of a line, such as the tuan of xu: “Being settled on heavenly location, which is righteous and central”; some because of the righteous situation of gang and rou, such as the tuan of gu: “With the gang on the top and the rou at the bottom, which is pliable and terminates the Gu”. Similarly, statements such as “The chronicle significance of the yu is so great”, “The fu is an exemplification of the heart of heaven and earth”, “Through observation of their sense, we can see the nature of the heaven, earth and myriads of things” and so on, are all derived from the same principle. If we admit that the observation of images undergirds the paradigm of the image in the Yizhuan, then the sequence and number of the hexagrams and lines display the paradigm of number in Yizhuan, and the interweaving of the paradigm of number and image comprise the second stratum of the interpretation of Yijing. This second-order interweaving corresponds to the Xiang in early-medieval interpreter Wang Bi’s (226-249) theory of Yijing: “The xiang (象, image) is the means to express the yi (意, idea), and the yan (言, writing) is to explain the xiang”. The function of this stratum is to elucidate the dao of yi: as per the “Appended Words” (系辞), this is described as “The sages drawing out images to
express the idea exhaustively”. However, the image and numbers have no substantial existence; therefore, the interpretation cannot end up in the stratum of the image-number, but should only be accomplished in a substantiated layer like the stratum of yan, or language.² Hence, Wang Bi alleged that “The image is derived from the idea and the yan is to elucidate the image. Nothing is a better means to express the idea than the image, and nothing better to express the image than the writing”. In this respect, the hermeneutical stratum of yan can exhaust all the data derivable from the material being of the hexagrams, composed as they are of the symbols of solid and broken lines. Similar to the written words, the symbols of lines possess solid shapes and their own original meanings. But, in the writing of the authors of Yizhuan, the aesthetic features of the symbols have been fully exemplified, rendering themselves a poetic language; the famous 20th-century philosopher Mou Zongsan (牟宗三, 1909-1995) even described this language as a “caricatural language” (Mou 16). After all, both the yi and the xiang display themselves in this poetic language, which serves as a material and concrete carrier (as introduced in Kuhn’s paradigm theory) that the theoretic paradigm always awaits in the form of materialized experiments before it can accomplish and verify them.

Thus one can conclude that Yixue is a most perfect and most typical model of paradigm theory. Firstly, the interpretation of the Yijing has transcended the objective interpretation by the first interpreter, i.e., the Yizhuan. As introduced above, the hermeneutic stratum of the idea in the interpretation of the Yizhuan exemplified their life experience by promoting binary categories such as qian and kun (heaven and earth) and so forth up to ontological categories: a most typical and subjective interpretation, because it transcended the original meaning of the text of the Yijing. In the later scholarship of the Yixue tradition, such transcendence kept developing: for instance, the Yixue of the Han Dynasty (from the late 3rd Century BCE to the early 3rd Century CE) developed the interpretive principles of image and number, while the Yixue of the Song Dynasty (from the 10th Century CE to the 13th Century CE) reinterpreted the theory of idea in the paradigm of Yi to an extreme. Though various schools were somewhat different in detailed approaches, the commensurability of these theories could never be neglected by the gap in concrete hermeneutical rules, for all of their interpretations were deployed under paradigms set up by the Yizhuan. Secondly, the stratified interpretation of Yizhuan also displayed itself as a dynamic and integral system, with affinities to the hermeneutic theory of Hans-Georg Gadamer. The transcendence from the stratum of language to the image and at last to the idea is not merely a theoretical model in accordance with Roman Ingarden’s way of existence of the text, because this transcendence is a process from understanding to interpretation, and to application as well, which all benefited from the graphical system of time and space depicted by the Yizhuan. Inspired by this system, the Yixue of the Han Dynasty exquisitely developed the chronological and spatial elements of the Yijing and merged the hermeneutic paradigm of the Yi with the astrological, mathematical and calendrical theories of that time. For the first time, a cosmological
incorporation of the four seasons, twelve months as well as twenty-four solar feasts, were introduced into the paradigm of \textit{Yi}. Thirdly, the inclusiveness or receptiveness of the \textit{Yixue} is also a source of the traditional fascination with the \textit{Yijing}. At the time of the \textit{Yizhuan}'s composition, its authors absorbed the contemporary cultural ideas of various schools, including Daoism and Confucianism, the ideas of Xunzi and Mencius, as well as the school of \textit{Yin-yang} and elemental theory, the school of the Mohists, the school of the Logicians, and so on. These schools were in hot debate at the time of the composition of the \textit{Yizhuan}, and hence one can see mixture synthesis of the ideas of these various factions, into a dynamic and inclusive system of idea, image and language. Therefore, the interpretation of the \textit{Yizhuan} itself is a productive and reproductive process, just like the changes of the \textit{Yi} themselves. Furthermore, the writing of all the “Ten Wings” of the \textit{Yizhuan} went through a staggered process, in which the early comments formed an acknowledgment of the \textit{Dao} of \textit{Yi}, and would be quickly followed and absorbed by the later interpreters. In their evolving readings of the \textit{Yizhuan}, the \textit{Dao} of \textit{Yi} became clearer and clearer, and the interpretation livelier and livelier. In this process, the \textit{Yizhuan} promoted the \textit{Yi} to a cosmology and ascribes the authorship of \textit{Yi} to the ancient sages: “The Yellow River forwarded the diagrams while the Luo River forwarded the writings, which were received as dominating principles”. “On the rise of \textit{Yi}, was it not in middle antiquity? And on the authors of \textit{Yi}, had they concerns about calamities?” Thus, later scholarship always based their own interpretations on an assumption of the cosmological significance of the \textit{Yi}, and their explanations would always try to verify the heavenly status of the \textit{Yi}, which had been systematically interpreted in the \textit{Yizhuan}. In the view of reception theory, the authors of the \textit{Yizhuan} should be the “first reader” of the \textit{Yijing}, and hence the writing of the \textit{Yizhuan} became the primary impetus of the \textit{Yixue}.

In conclusion, the interpretation of \textit{Yixue} reflected a consciousness of the paradigmatic character of the \textit{Yi}, especially those broadly accepted theories, which would always try to elucidate the \textit{Dao} of \textit{Yi} supposed to have been instantiated by the authors of the \textit{Yijing} in the fabrication of the images and numbers; however, this process of explication would, paradoxically, orient their own understanding of \textit{Yi} in the form of a paradigm. Thus, a hermeneutic circle was formed. The discrepancies between the rules of interpretation followed by various \textit{Yixue} can be catalogued through attentive and “scientific” research, but at a metaphysical level, they all are oriented by the foundational paradigm first constructed by the \textit{Yizhuan}. This phenomenon could be best explained by this statement: “The whole world ultimately comes to one end, whatever the origin, and all ideas end up in one ultimate congruence, whatever ways their deliberation takes” (\textit{xici}).
III. The Modern Evolution of Yi Paradigms

The hermeneutic circle which originated from the *Yizhuan* was broken at the turn of the 20th century. Following the revolution of 1911, there was an enormous impetus to cultural and intellectual modernization, such as the “New Culture Movement” (新文化运动). In the field of classical scholarship, modernization resulted in the “Suspect-Antiquity Trend” (疑古思潮), which pursued a scientific method in philological studies in contrast to traditional methods of scholarship. In the scholarship of Yixue, the most influential scholars were the members of the “analytical school”, or *Gushibian* (古史辨), including Gu Jiegang (顾颉刚, 1893-1980), Qian Xuantong (钱玄同, 1897-1939), Li Jingchi (李镜池, 1902-1975) and so on. In summary, their methodology was to “Break the antiquated traditional methodology by means of evidential research, thereby disclosing the origin of the historical texts” (Yang 113). Driven by this idea, they pursued rigorous textual research into the so-called “objective facts” reflected in the judgments of the hexagrams and lines. After putting the latter interpretation of the *Yizhuan* into brackets, they foregrounded the historical context, proving that the *Yijing* and *Yizhuan* were written in different eras, the discrepancy of which was so evident that the two books should be rigidly separated. Thus, the traditional method of “Correlating the *Yijing* to *Yizhuan* and interpreting the *Yijing* in accordance with the *Yizhuan*” lost its patina of objectivity, and hence its claim to legitimacy. In this sense, the assertion that the whole was the product of the earliest sages was discredited; the authors of *Yizhuan* being newly appraised as necessarily scholars of the later Warring States period (战国时期) and the Qin and Han Dynasties (秦汉时期), their statements were declared “farthest from the objective standard”, and therefore the least relevant. Hence the original appearance of *Yijing* should only be a book of divination, which only recorded the objective facts of that time; in contrast, the *Yizhuan* was a subjective exposition which rendered the whole a book of philosophy. Furthermore, there were no necessary correlations between the judgments of the hexagrams and the image-numbers described by the *Yizhuan*.

Under the resonant influence of *Gushibian* scholarship, the foundation of the traditional readings of the Yi was shaken: the *Yizhuan* and the *Yijing* were logically divorced, the *Yizhuan* rendered ahistorical and hence irrelevant to the *Yijing*. From the standpoint of traditional Yixue, the new theory did propose a freshly renovated paradigm which has been described by some scholars as a “Copernican Revolution” (Yang 115) in classical studies. But what one needs to ponder seriously is how the *Gushibian* scholars could possess such an enormous power to override the tradition of Yi which had existed for over 2000 years. As we know, despite their tremendous influence in Yixue, very few of the *Gushibian* school were “professional” scholars of Yi; though they successfully shook the foundations of the traditional paradigm of the Yi, they were far from successfully establishing a thoroughly new paradigm; they did not bring out a perfect theoretical hermeneutic system of Yi. The reason that such an immature and temporary school could break through one of the most strongly-held
fortresses of traditional Chinese intellectual culture was the motivating force supplied by the evolution in modern Chinese intellectual history more broadly. In his commentary on Hu Shi’s (胡适, 1891-1962) book *Outline of the Philosophy of China* (中国哲学史大纲), Li Zehou (李泽厚, 1930-) said the book “for the first time broke through the traditional ideas, standards, norms and disciplines that dominated China for thousands of years, rendering itself a revolutionary paradigm” (Li 912). Therefore, what the Gushibian scholarship was perceived to have brought about was not the exposition of a few historical facts, but a thorough subversion of the hermeneutical method of the basic classics. In this case, the enormous influence of the paradigm of the Yi brought by the Gushibian scholars is therefore reasonable. In spite of numerous potential flaws in its logical system, the value of the impetus and essence of a new paradigm is not limited to its initial form, but to its subsequent evolution and influence. Therefore, to observe the full form of the paradigm established by the Gushibian scholars, one must make a close study of its modern reception, from which one can see three primary areas of engagement: 1. the writing of the Zhouyi; 2. the fundamental nature of the Zhouyi; and 3. the interpretation of the Zhouyi. In the traditional paradigm of the Yi, these three aspects are totally unremarked upon; nevertheless, all three become hot points of debate under the stimulus of the new paradigm.

Firstly, the purpose of the most recent scholarly approaches to the Zhouyi has been historicist. In traditional scholarship of the Yi, the assertion that the text was “written by three sages and reflecting three archaic eras” (人更三世, 事历三古) was broadly accepted; in this view, both the classics and the commentary of Zhouyi were written by ancient sages, the eight trigrams were created by Pao Xi (庖羲), the 64 hexagrams and the statements of lines and hexagrams by King Wen (文王), and the Yizhuan was written by Confucius. This assertion was originally introduced by the Yizhuan itself, with cryptic references such as “the sages set up hexagrams to observe the images, appended statements to determine the auspiciousness, deduced ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ to engender changes,” and so forth. Thus the text of Zhouyi was covered by a layer of mystery which, as we concluded before, ascribed the writing of the Zhouyi to ancient sages, and this ascription enabled a self-verifying hermeneutical paradigm that structured all later reception of the text until the modern period. However, once the Gushibian scholars escaped from this traditional paradigm, they would naturally lead people to deny the roots of this assertion. For example, Guo Moruo (郭沫若, 1892-1978) commented: “The Yijing was originally a basic script for ancient divination; these were not written by one single author, nor were these accomplished in one time” (29). In the view of the new paradigm, since the Zhouyi was not written by one person, its ascription to ancient sages would be automatically negated. As for the assertion that “Confucius wrote the Yizhuan”, this was denounced even more vehemently. Indeed, the ascription to the three sages had many suspicious points, so that even the repeated appearance of “Confucius said” in the Wenyan and Xici could be good evidence.³ For this, Ouyang Xiu (欧阳修, 1007-1072), Cui Shu (崔述,
1740-1816), Kang Youwei (康有为, 1858-1927), and others had all proposed doubts about this assertion, but none of their doubts were decisive, for most readers of the *Yijing* still deeply believed in the *Yijing* as an instantiation of the *Dao* of the sages, consistent with the power of the ruling paradigm. Then, in this case, when the sages were never acknowledged as the only writers of *Yijing*, the formidable power of the modern evolution of this paradigm was even more evident.

Secondly, the study of the basic nature of the *Zhouyi* was in fact a study of the *Zhouyi*’s mode of textual existence. The assertion of the *Yizhuan* that “The Yi is the paradigm of heaven and earth; therefore, it can fulfill the *Dao* of heaven and earth” demonstrates that the *Zhouyi* was regarded in traditional scholarship as a book of philosophical investigation and of pursuing the ultimate nature of the universe. Though the study of the *Yijing* originated in divination, numerological theory evidently described *Yijing* divination as a conscious calculation. This assertion was of course oriented by the same paradigm as the assertion of a “*Yijing* Written by Sages”, and the two could justify each other as well, creating a hermeneutical circle. However, the *Gushibian* scholars’ Darwinist and positivist study of *Yijing* could not accept this hermeneutical circle. As mentioned above, the *Gushibian* scholars first recovered the historical context of the *Yijing*, because in their view, each statement on the hexagrams or lines were objective records of ancient affairs, from which one could observe the lives and ideas of their time, as was stated by Guo Moruo: “If we can systematically sort out the items of statement that reflect the concrete life as superior or subordinate, we could obtain a view of the social life and all its models of spiritual production. We let the *Yijing* introduce the *Yijing* itself, and dispense with all the mystic clothing added by later people, and thus we can see a kind of primitive people dancing nakedly” (29). On the contrary, the *Yizhuan* was recognized by the *Gushibian* school as absolutely a work of philosophy. Because of this separation, the *Yijing* and *Yizhuan* had become two books diametrically opposed in their basic nature, and an inevitable result was the breaking of the hermeneutic paradigm under which the *Yijing* and *Yizhuan* had been integrated. The *Yizhuan* had praised the supposed philosophy of the basic classics, and the *Ten Wings* was the receptor and interpreter of this philosophy of the *Yijing*. Since modern scholarship defined the mode of existence of the text of the *Yijing* as a record of the process of divination, or of historical facts, the existence of the *Yijing* was therefore re-determined to be a passive, mechanic and static “objective text”.

Finally, the *Gushibian* reevaluation focused on the interpretation of the particular cryptic statements attached to hexagrams and lines. The paradigm of interpreting the *Yijing* in accordance with the *Yizhuan* had been established since the appearance of the *Yizhuan*, and the paradigm had been further intensified by the combination of the texts of *Yijing* and *Yizhuan* in the Han Dynasty. In the currently-held view, the *Xiang-zhuan* (象传) and the *Tuan-zhuan* (彖传) interpret each item of the statements of hexagrams and lines, the *Wen-yan* (文言) elucidates the essence of two hexagrams of *Qian* and *Kun*, and the *Xi-ci, Shuo-gua* (说卦), *Xu-gua* (序卦) and *Za-gua* (杂卦)
and so on interpret the *Yijing* at a high level of philosophy that mimics the perceptions of the sages, rendering the *Yizhuan* the first explicator of the *Yijing*. Now there were over two thousand primary works of classical exegesis on the *Yijing*, but few of those books ever breached the paradigm originated by the *Yizhuan*. However, after the rise of the *Gushibian* scholars, cosmological faith in the *Yijing* had been greatly reduced, and the interpretations of the *Yizhuan* had also lost their legitimacy. In their theory, the *Yijing* was an object of historical interest, while the *Yizhuan* developed the thought of the *Yijing* on a basis totally different from that of the *Yijing*, which obviously disobeyed the ‘scientific standard’, and this was the reason why the *Yizhuan* had been determined a most untrustworthy text in Gu Jiegang’s commentary. Thus, based on the principle of “probing the truth”, they excluded the disturbance of the *Yizhuan*, and reinterpreted the statements of the *Yijing*. In this field, Gao Heng’s achievement was the most outstanding. He published *Modern Notes on the Ancient Classics of the Zhouyi*, in which he systematically reinterpreted the *Yijing*. He had two major principles of interpreting the *Yijing*: not relying on the *Yizhuan*, and not referring to traditional image-number theory (Gao 2). In his book, Gao offered an attempt at objective analysis of all the names and titles of the hexagrams along with the rites of divination with which they were associated, and pointed out that both the names and titles appeared late in the text’s evolution, rather than what the traditional paradigm had stated, that all were created by a sage who observed the “images” of the natural world and established the hexagrams to correspond. The most important part of the book was the chapter that interpreted the four concepts of “Yuan, Heng, Li, Zhen”, which totally negated the traditional paradigm. Traditional scholarship of the *Yijing* defined these four concepts as the Four Virtues (四德). But despite this generalization, Gao Heng thought that all four characters were ordinary judgment words during divination, without any profound philosophical significance. In accordance with philology and etymology, he studied all kinds of ancient texts to elucidate the original meaning of the four characters: “Yuan means magnificent; Heng is the dedication in sacrifice; Li is benefit; Zhen is divination.” “It was said in the statement of the hexagram of Kun: ‘Yuan Heng, benefit from the fortification of a female horse.’ If we define the Yuan, Heng, Li and Zhen as the four virtues, then what is this statement talking about? Can a female horse have the so-called virginity? In my past discussion, what was said in the Wenyan and the Zuozhuan (左传) was not the original meaning of Yuan, Heng, Li, Zhen” (Gao 110). Gao’s interpretation almost thoroughly overrode the logic of the *Yizhuan*, because the four characters not only appeared in great number, but also played a key role in the interpretation of many items and statements of hexagrams and lines. This empirical way of interpretation, based on the etymological study of the original shapes of the symbols of characters, with numerous unearthed texts as circumstantial evidence, caused a great shock to the scholarship of the *Yijing*. Gao Heng was not the first philologist in Chinese history, but what is most noteworthy is that few scholars realized the thorough separation with the hermeneutical past which was enacted by this methodology. This is
IV. Conclusion: Paradigm Lost in the Present Interpretation of the Yi Jing

In current scholarship, though the Gushibian paradigm of Yi Jing is the most influential, it still remains questionable on many points. In spite of this, the revolutionary paradigm in Yixue had changed the fundamental appearance of Yi Jing scholarship from the root. To this day, few scholars would bypass the paradigm of separating the Yizhuan from the Yi Jing while studying the Yi Jing.

However, the flaws in the theoretical system of the Gushibian scholars should never be neglected. In the previous discussion, we have stressed that the most ideal paradigm in Kuhn’s theory should be a most transcendental, most inclusive and systematized existence, which should never be limited to materialized principles, but should always observe its objects at a more transcendental level and thereby structure the whole of a research approach to a given subject. No academic paradigm is of particular value that does not inclusively orient the study of a given field. But can any given paradigm exhaustively interpret even the most trivial data? Is there a more profound, more transcendental “overall paradigm” above those paradigms? In comparison with this overall paradigm, a lesser paradigm that fails to offer an authentic understanding, or even fails to elucidate itself satisfactorily, can only be regarded as a lost paradigm.

In recent decades, studies on paradigm theory have turned toward cognitive psychology; while some scholars have even outlined the Wittgensteinian elements of Kuhn’s paradigm theory, as, for example, what Kindi has pointed out: “Wittgenstein’s parable and his theses on meaning that we have cited, provide Kuhn with a philosophical basis for his SSR” (1995). This correlation was responded to by a number of scholars (for example, Sharrock and Read 2002, Andersen, Barker and Chen 2006), but this debate has centered around the topic of incommensurability, the core concept of paradigm theory itself. However, few have put much effort into an analysis of a typical “lost paradigm” such as the interpretation of the Yi Jing. As discussed above, the close study of the evolution and misrepresentation of the hermeneutical paradigms of the Yi could be another fruitful direction for the discussion of the incommensurability, though the discussion is deployed in a negative logic against the theory of Kuhn; such is the value of the study of the paradigm of the Gushibian scholars.

The fundamental resource of the hermeneutical paradigm of the Gushibian scholars was a scientific attitude—a methodology that emphasized a strictly empirical study and a rigorous reasoning—to disclose historical fact. Different from the

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the foremost reason why Gao Heng, a scholar of a century ago who reconstructed the hermeneutical study with trivial obstacles, must be recognized as a fundamental driver of evolution in Yi Jing hermeneutical paradigms.
intention of “integration” of the paradigm of interpreting the *Yijing* in accordance to *Yizhuan*, the new paradigm focused more on “separation,” which firmly focused on penetrating the vague history of interpretation and on distinguishing the proper borders of exegesis, to realize an absolutely static “truth” in history, and to tease apart the kernel of all material concepts from its enfolding layers. The truth of the *Yijing* disclosed by the *Gushibian* scholars is good evidence, not only of the gap between the *Yijing* and the *Yizhuan*, but also of all the primary judgments on the hexagrams and lines in their objective “origin.” Is this conceptual way of thought appropriate for the *Yijing*, a text that has been interpreted by numerous generations of scholars? Furthermore, if all empirical studies are trying to disclose the original existence of the *Yijing*, then, which text, at which point in time, is the most authentic existence of the text of the *Yijing*? Is it the earliest appearance of the binary-built hexagram? The answer is definitely negative, because none of the statements were written at that time; i.e., the book did not exist yet. Or is it the one in the moment when all statements were written down? For example, if we accept that the date of composition of the *Yijing* was in the middle of the West Zhou Dynasty (西周时期), could we be certain that all interpretations of each item in the original statements strictly correlated to their original meanings? Take the terms “Yuan, Heng, Li, Zhen” as an example: in Gao Heng’s interpretation, he would always trace these back to their origin in oracular divination of the Shang dynasty, but were there changes in the meaning between the Shang and the Western Zhou? How can we be sure that a book composed in the middle of the Western Zhou followed the original meaning of an undeviating oral tradition for a millennium? If we can even separate the *Yizhuan* from the *Yijing* because of a gap of several centuries, how can we ascertain the authenticity of the text of the *Yijing*? As for the “true history” proposed by Gu Jiegang, it cannot be decisively established either, because there is still an assumption of epistemological transcendence during divination. Generally, the fundamental process of divination is as such:

- Questioning
- Outlining the Basic Hexagram
- Drawing the Destination Hexagram
- Correlating the Statement
- Explaining the Statement
- Replying to the Request

(Wu 175)

Diviners offer explanations to the meaning of each statement which arises in response to their divinatory actions. For example, when one sees the reading for the “Initial Six of *Kun*”: “Treading on frost, and here comes the thick ice”, one must correlate the original meanings of the statements—such as drawing a picture of treading on real ice—to a more or less obvious metaphorical indication of the auspicious or inauspicious. In this case, words such as “tread”, “frost” and “thick ice” have all their stable original meaning, like the “répertoire” in reception aesthetics. However, if one limits one’s recognition to the literal meaning of the images, one could not outline a judgment of auspicious or inauspicious. This transcendence may be an intuitive acknowledgment, and even inclusive of various cultural influences as well as some mystic ‘prejudice’, but it is of key importance for the *Yixue*. This transcendence, based
on a materialized and objective existence, but also transcending it, is just a typical model of the traditional hermeneutical paradigm of China, providing a transcendent paradigm of thought for later scholarship, rendering itself a gate of all mysteries.

Thus, the Gushibian scholars successfully effected an evolution in the operative paradigm, and formed an enormous community based around their new paradigm, which nevertheless remains a lost paradigm. So-called objectivity will never realize the authentic history of a supposedly “original” context, for the history here is far from what they described as a static existence, but a dynamic, chronically extensive way of existence. Furthermore, the traditional hermeneutic paradigm of interpreting the Yijing in accordance with the Yizhuan had in fact produced a living tradition, along with the whole history of reception after the Yizhuan, reflecting millennia of interpretation of the Yijing, and this tradition of interpretation is just where the true value of Yixue lies. What is more valuable in the hermeneutic tradition is not the static persistence of objective facts, mechanical as a dead body, but the dynamism of historical existence. Of course, the old hermeneutical paradigm that has already been overridden will not, in any case, resurrect and come back to dominate contemporary Yixue, as it did in previous centuries. Today, what we need to accept should be a refreshed paradigm which is inclusive of all previous paradigms, or, in other words, a paradigm that transcends the opposing paradigms that have been in conflict on the methodological level. The empirical way of studying the Yijing could not remain the ultimate dominating paradigm forever, but some of the discoveries elaborated by this empirical study could continue to help us formulate useful historicist analysis. On the other hand, though the traditional methodology has almost been thoroughly overridden in the past century, it still remains a most influential and profound paradigm, especially for the life experience and the hermeneutical circle imbued in the “old” paradigm which has accompanied the development of Chinese civilization for millennia now.

After all, the modern scholarship of the Yi is in urgent need of methodological retrospection, as well as adjustment and interventions in the ongoing development of new Yixue hermeneutical paradigms. The most appropriate paradigm for Yixue will remain a lost paradigm unless it can return to the lived aesthetics of Chinese tradition, which is both inclusive of objective history and penetrating into the whole course of Yijing reception with the attitude of a refreshed and renovated hermeneutical methodology.

Notes

1. Etymological study showed that “Yuan” meant head, “Heng” meant dedication, “Li” meant beneficiary, and “Zhen” meant divination. The citation here used them as examples to improve interpretation in the paradigm of Yizhuan and its posterity.

2. Generally, the Chinese term yan or 言 is translated as language. However, the stratum of yan here is
a totality of all written symbols other than a linguistic system. In this sense, the  here is noted as Writing.

3. In the books of Confucius, Confucius himself would not make comments like “Confucius said”, for those words were being presented by himself. So, the phrase “Confucius said” always indicates that the following citation came from records written by Confucius’s posterity.

4. All books mentioned above are different sections of the Yizhuan, which make up the so-called Ten Wings.

**Works Cited**


