

The hidden/flying dragon:
an exploration of the *Book of Changes (I Ching)*
in terms of Nietzsche's philosophy

by

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Summary

- Title:** The hidden/flying dragon: An exploration of the *Book of Changes* (*I Ching*) in terms of Nietzsche's philosophy
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The ancient Chinese *I Ching*, the *Book of Changes*, and the philosophy of the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) both assert that the universe exists in a state of change. The *I Ching*, originally a book of divination, illustrates the changing phenomena of the natural world in terms of sixty-four hexagrams, which are figures composed of six lines — yielding and firm lines, representing actual conditions and relationships existing in the world and caused by the interplay between two primordial forces, *yin* and *yang*. The *I Ching* shows that on the macro level the Tao works in the universe, in heaven and on earth, and on the micro level it applies to man. The *I Ching* teaches harmony with Tao and its power (natural law and moral law), so that its reader may take appropriate action in any given situation with reference to the hexagrams and their appended judgments as revealed by the oracle.

Nietzsche, however, regards the world as the Will to Power, 'a monster of energy', like a storming and flooding ocean eternally changing, where harmony and order seems impossible. His mouthpiece, Zarathustra, who teaches the *Übermensch*, encourages a war-like attitude towards life. Zarathustra's second metamorphosis of an evolving spirit, the warrior lion, marks the difference between the Nietzschean *Übermensch* and the Chinese sage who attains harmony and balance within and without, a mysterious union with heaven. Zarathustra's third metamorphosis, a playing child, creates itself as its own 'bridge' through a process of self-overcoming, whereas the *I Ching* indicates order to be the 'bridge' over chaos, the order of the human world being expressed in the five cardinal relationships. Whereas the *I Ching* advises its reader to follow their own nature and fate in order to lead a harmonious

moral life, Nietzsche's *Übermensch* is 'the annihilator of morality' and paradoxically 'the designation of a type of supreme achievement' (*EH* Books 1).

With his idea of the *Übermensch*, Nietzsche indicates that morality is a pose (*BGE* 216). He seeks to make us become aware that we should invent our own virtue and create our own way in order to become what we are. He criticizes Christian morality, calling himself 'the first immoralist'. His shocking approach attempts to make us become aware of the possibility that a 'noble morality' and 'higher moralities' ought to be possible. His *Übermensch* represents such a higher mode of existence.

Zarathustra also teaches the doctrine of eternal recurrence, implying that moment is eternity, changelessness within change. Multifarious manifestations are the expression of the Tao. Everything is interconnected and interdependent. Whereas ordinary men see the continuity of phenomena as real, enlightened beings are aware of the transitory and illusive nature of the self and all things. The Nietzschean *Übermensch* embodies the characteristics of an enlightened being, a Buddha or Bodhisattva in Buddhist terms, characteristics such as wisdom and compassion. Therefore, the practice of the Bodhisattva is explored as a feasible way for actualizing the Nietzschean hypothetical *Übermensch*.

Key terms: *Book of Changes (I Ching)*, hexagram, trigram, yin and yang, Tao, Nietzsche, Zarathustra, *Übermensch*, will to power, eternal recurrence, Buddha, Bodhisattva.

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Abbreviations for Nietzsche's Works

- A: *The Anti-Christ*. In *PN*.
- BGE: *Beyond Good and Evil*. In *BW*.
- BT: *The Birth of Tragedy*. 1999. In *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*. (ed.) Raymond Geuss & Ronald Speirs. Translated by Ronald Speirs. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- BW: *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*. 1968. Edited and Translated by Walter Kaufmann. New York: The Modern Library.
- CW: *The Case of Wagner*. In *BW*.
- D: *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality*. 1997. Edited by Maudemarie Clark & Brian Leiter. Trans. by R. J. Hollingdale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- DWV: *The Dionysiac World View*. 1999. In *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*. (ed.) Raymond Geuss & Ronald Speirs. Translated by Ronald Speirs. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- EH: *Ecce Homo*. In *BW*.
- GM: *On the Genealogy of Morals: A Polemic*. 1967. Translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale. New York: Vintage Books.
- GS: *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in Rhymes and an Appendix of Song*. 1974. Translated by Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage Books.
- HAH: *Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits*. 1986. Translated by R. J. Hollingdale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- P: *The Philosopher: Reflections on the Struggle Between Art and Knowledge*. In *PT*.
- PAK: *The Philosopher as Cultural Physician*. In *PT*.
- PB: *Thoughts on the Meditation: Philosophy in Hard Times*. In *PT*.
- PN: *The Portable Nietzsche*. 1971. Translated by Walter Kaufmann. London: Chatto & Windus.
- PT: *Philosophy and Truth: Selections from Nietzsche's Notebooks of the Early 1870's*. 1979. Edited and translated by Daniel Breazeale. Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press International.

- PW: *On the Pathos of Truth*. In *PT*.
- SE: *Schopenhauer as educator*. In *UM*.
- TI: *Twilight of the Idols*. In *PN*.
- U: *Unpublished Writings from the period of Unfashionable Observations*. 1995. Translated by Richard T. Gray. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- UDH: *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*. In *UM*.
- UM: *Untimely Meditations*. 1983. Translated by R.J. Hollingdale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- WL: *On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense*. In *PT*.
- WLN: *Writing From the Late Notebooks*. 2003. Ed. Rüdiger Bittner. Trans. by Kate Sturge. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- WP: *The Will To Power*. 1968. Trans. Walter Kaufmann & R. J. Hollingdale. New York: Vintage Books.
- WS: *The Wanderer and His Shadow*. In *HAH*.
- WWK: *The Struggle between Science and Wisdom*. In *PT*.
- Z: *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A book for All and None*. In *PN*.