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THE MEANING OF ENVIRONMENTAL FREEDOM IN LIU BOWEN'S  
DIVINATION PHILOSOPHY: THE EXAMPLE OF COVID-19

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**Abstract:** COVID-19 has brought about reflections on the relationships between people and their governments. Compared to some Westerners' libertarian thinking that the state took advantage of the pandemic to deprive individuals of their freedom, people from countries with Chinese cultural heritage tended to be more collaborative, as they believed the situation was rooted in unseen changes in the environment. This article argues that this thinking characterizes a conceptualization of environmental freedom which was based on the thesis of vital energy, or qi氣. Chinese had developed the classical I Ching to predict the changes of the environment in the form of flowing qi, in order to make informed decisions for political actions. Liu Bowen of the Ming dynasty integrated this. This paper aims to demonstrate its significance in the contemporary world by rethinking its constitution through Carl Jung's theory of the synchronistic principle. Moreover, we illustrate how to conduct and interpret the result of divination predicting the COVID-19 pandemic, with a focus on how the government can choose to produce the greatest good in the face of such a quandary.

**Key words:** COVID-19, environmental freedom, Golden Treatises(黃金策), Liu Bowen, principle of synchronicity, wǔxíngyì (五行易).

## 1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an all-encompassing impact on humankind. The inconveniences and losses brought all of us to reflect upon that human beings are organically connected with each other, as well as with their environment and nature itself. The lesson was two-fold: The nonchalant attitude and the conspiracy theory adopted by individualistic libertarians simply could not do away the fact that every person's safety was now subjected to other people's COVID-19 prevention behaviors, that is, no one could stay out of the situation. However, an individual also needed to refuse the temptation for the government to take advantage of people's fear of each other and grew into a "mighty Leviathan" which assumed absolute power without being held accountable at the same time (Chmielewski 2020, 366-380).

Thomas Hobbes coined the word "Leviathan" to describe a sovereign body that individuals voluntarily surrender part of their rights to and that in turn has the duty to protect them from fears for their lives in a primordial state of anarchy. By calling the latter "the state of nature", Hobbes opposed the government as a man-made artifact to what is original about and unchanged in the interconnection of human beings as moral actors, a confrontation that is characteristic of Western political philosophy and provides soil for disputes and unrests as seen in European and American countries mentioned above.

Unlike its Western counterparts, Chinese philosophy adopted a naturalistic perspective into what exists before relations of governance emerges among human beings. To begin with, the moral self of Confucianism is realized through nothing but the relationship with others, the relationship with the society, and the relationship with the environment (Rošker 2021, 70). As with all other things in the world, these relationships latch onto regularities and changes governed by the vital energy, or *qi* 氣. It is in the omnipresence of *qi*, that the connections between all things, no matter how variable and transient it may look, and all things are equal and one (Ge 1993, 95). For Confucian scholars, relations of governance between the sovereign and the subjects are as reducible to ubiquitous energy flows as all other human relations. As for freedom, it is only a function of the flow of *qi*. Given the fact that *qi* is constantly flowing, an optimum between governance and the right to freedom can only be reached through an active state of equilibrium that indistinguishably involves all the tangible and intangible parties.

Put in the context of COVID-19, this understanding does not see human freedom and government or governance as two monolithic wholes that confront each other. Traditionally, the thesis that relations of governance emerge from an elevated flow of *qi* was one way or another put at the service of the kings and emperors of ancient and imperial China.

At times of great difficulties and challenges such as what we were encountering now, monarchs and their aids would consult divinatory results for adequate and proper actions to take, because they were believed to offer an otherwise hidden picture of currents of *qi* in the milieu of all things under heaven.

What relevance did it have in modern times? What could we make of this tradition of Chinese political philosophy except dismissing it completely as pseudo-science or superstition at all? In this essay, we would like to use the scholar and also Emperor's advisor of the Ming Dynasty Liu Bowen's (劉伯溫) theory of divination to demonstrate that the political doctrine of *qi*, in combination with mantic practices, to provide a different scheme for explaining social-political actions and processes, of which the above mentioned difference in people's reactions to restrictive COVID policies in Eastern and Western countries could be used as an example. Supernatural and irrational as it might seem, this scheme nevertheless was based on a certain kind of normative utilitarianism that, we would argue, went hand in hand with the Confucian philosophy to make the latter relevant again in today's global politics.

### 1.1 Liu Bowen's divination philosophy and Carl Jung's principle of synchronicity

Liu Bowen (July 1, 1311—May 16, 1375) who compiled and founded a philosophy of divination which viewed the world as one filled with the vital energy *qi*. Everything has the attribute of *qi* and hence manifests regular changes of its fate or fortune (Zhou 2012, 49). Instead of being fatalistic, such philosophy of divination allows for a certain freedom one can enjoy when making choices in one's environment (Huang and Huang 2020, 8-9). This "environmentally freedom" refers to the degree to which moral actors make decisions according to random information gathered in and from their environment and is proportionate to the amount of information. The more information, the bigger freedom one can enjoy, and then the more favorable one's decision for future actions can be.

In order to retrieve the information from the environment, Liu resorted to the divinatory practices of *wǔxíngyì* (五行易). Based on the Book of Changes (I Ching or Yijing 易經) tradition, *wǔxíngyì* incorporated the theory of Five Phases (*wǔxíng* 五行) (Ames 2012, 330) and created a very complicated system of signs and symbols which it used to represent regularities and changes of *qi* in the physical outer world. We would like to argue that Liu's *wǔxíngyì* applied something like what Swiss psychologist Carl Jung called "synchronicity" (Nagao 2012, 202-207), or an acausal connecting principle, for retrieving and organizing the information in such a way that allows for a certain degree of freedom to choose.

Carl Jung believed that there are in the physical outer world always abnormalities whose descriptions do not fit into the causative rationality characteristic of mainstream scientific thinking. These “acausal or synchronistic occurrences”, defy “the general rule of space, time and causality” and are easily dismissed as “haphazard chance grouping” (Bennet 1985, 101). However, according to Jung, they are meaningful coincidences rooted in what he called collective unconsciousness (Jung 1959). An example of such synchronistic connection with the unconscious is mantic practices. Every true reading of horoscope and astrology, in the form of a later fulfillment of a prediction, represents a “psychological moment” “when, as the consensus gentium has established since ancient times, synchronistic phenomena occur” (Jung 1959). To be precise, it represents a situation of the physical outer world coinciding with the chance result of the divination method, a meaningful coincidence that “cannot be a question of cause and effect, but of a falling together in time, a kind of simultaneity” (Jung 1973, 91). Likewise, the intuitive and psychic power of *I Ching* is also based on the acausal or synchronistic connective principle, which is part of the irrational function of the consciousness.

We would like to move further from Jung’s teleological understanding to argue for a more analytical perspective. Put precisely, *wǔxíngyì* accommodates numerous classes of seemingly unrelated signs and symbols through whose juxtapositions and combinations information from all the things under heaven becomes accessible. Just like a fulfilled prediction based on divinatory rituals being the meaningful falling-together of the prediction itself. Synchronicity in this sense can be viewed as what ancient Chinese called cosmological webs of vital energy or *qi*, and a real synchronic occurrence as the thesis of Heavenly Induction on Man (*tiān rén gǎnyìng* 天人感應). Having analytically established the retrieval of information characteristic of the *wǔxíngyì* divination on a synchronic plane, we could see that Liu Bowen’s writings presented a holistic perspective into this physical outer world as a wholeness bound together by *qi*. This allows not only the diviner to claim, as it were, prophesying power but also the Man to know exactly where to position himself in the network of *qi* and in the midst of Heaven and Earth (Huang and Huang 2020).

## 2. Basic theory and interpretive framework of *wǔxíngyì*

Liu compiled his writings about *wǔxíngyì* into the book of Golden Treatises (*huangjin ce* 黃金策) which features a sophisticated set of divinatory techniques using what can be called synchronistic arrangements and connections of distinctive systems of signs and symbols. To begin with, the diviner has to follow fixed rituals of divination to produce a *guà* (卦), a totem-like hexagram of six stacked horizontal lines named *yáo* (爻). Using the Chinese lunar calendar, Golden Treatises sets out to include

into these patterns a set of ordinal numerals named *dìzhī* (地支) or Earthly Branches (hereafter as EBs), originating from ancient Chinese astronomers' observation of the celestial movements. EBs are then matched with the Five Phases (hereafter as FPs), which are in fact different phases of *qi* that is temporarily attached to five basic constituting agents for all things under heaven, namely, mental, wood, water, fire, and earth. This match, an energy conversion in effect, is then reflected through Day Time (*rìchén* 日辰, hereafter as DT) (Wang 2012, 103), which in turn is one of the two sources from which the power represented by the physical environment comes. All these, together with the other power source named Month Build (*yuèjiàn* 月建, hereafter as MB) (Li 2012a, 143) and other symbols, builds a framework for both empowering and confining the outcome of divination, i.e., hexagram and its six yao lines.

The hexagram itself, on the other hand, relies for its meaning on yet another set of symbols named *liùqīn* (六親) (Li 2012b, 323), or the Six Kin Types (hereafter as SKT) which hang on the six constituting lines one-on-one to compare each of them with a distinctive human relationship. These relationships are Offspring (*zǐsūn* 子孫), Wife-Wealth (*qī cái* 妻財), Officer-Ghost (*guānguǐ* 官鬼), Parents (*fùmǔ* 父母), Brother (*xiōngdì* 兄弟), and World (*shì* 世), referring to personal background, and Reaction (*yīng* 應), meaning response from one of the above. They come to interact with each other in four different ways: Begetting (*shēng* 生), prevailing (*kē* 剋), conflicting (*chōng* 沖), and uniting (*hé* 合). Furthermore, the lines thus hung upon by Kin Types might be subjected to change, enabling the divination to allow of an alternative hexagram. These changing lines, or *dòngyáo* (動爻), will represent the power that social networks exert on the subject of divination, which, according to Liu, the success of a divination will eventually hinge (Dai 2009, 111-130; Huang and Sun 2004). The basic concepts of *wǔxíngyì* are as follows:

(1) *Five Phases* (Wang 2013, 136)

FPs indicate incessant phases in which the invisible, undetectable *qi* undergoes in the form of five different agents: Wood, fire, earth, metal and water. Liu's methodology relies fundamentally on FPs. The FPs can generate and prevail over each other in the following way: Metal begets water and water begets wood. Wood begets fire and fire begets earth. Earth begets metal and, again, metal begets water. This cycle goes on. On the other hand, metal overcomes wood and wood overcomes earth. Earth suppresses water and water suppresses fire. Fire suppresses metal and, again, metal suppresses wood. Both processes of generation and suppression go on in a continuous manner continuously.

(2) Earthly Branches (EBs)

EBs are mostly ascribed to different time units (Table 1) , especially when combined with the ten Heavenly Stems (*tiāngān* 天干) to form a sexagenary cycle (*jiǎzǐ* 甲子) (Huang and Sun 2004, 42). But Golden Treatises focuses mainly on the days and months to highlight the two main sources of power, Day Time and Month Build. Similarly, EBs also correspond to different FPs, making the latter’s movement inextricably intertwined with circular movements of celestial bodies (Ye 2003, 95).

**Table 1.** Examples of using Earthly Branches in Chinese Lunar Calendar (Jan. 2021)

Earthly Branch	<i>zǐ</i> 子	<i>chǒu</i> 丑	<i>yīn</i> 寅	<i>mǎo</i> 卯	<i>chén</i> 辰	<i>sì</i> 巳	<i>wǔ</i> 午	<i>wèi</i> 未	<i>shēn</i> 申	<i>yǒu</i> 酉	<i>xū</i> 戌	<i>hài</i> 亥
months	11th	12th	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th
days	Jan. 4	Jan. 5	Jan. 6	Jan. 7	Jan. 8	Jan. 9	Jan. 10	Jan. 11	Jan. 12	Jan. 13	Jan. 14	Jan. 15

(3) Day Time and the four prominent states of Long Life (Wang 2014, 119)

EBs thus work to delineate 12 different states in which an FP will evolve and accomplish a life cycle. When a Phase encounters an EB on a specific day, a Period of Life Fortune will be triggered. In divination, this represents the power of Day Time. Liu only selected four prominent states of Long Life for Day Time, which were Imperial Vigor, Tomb, Extinction, and Fetus. Among them, a Long Life sign means the matter in question is burgeoning in a positive way, with its energy going up until reaching a summit, which is, in turn, suggested by an Imperial Vigor sign. On the other hand, a Tomb sign suggests the matter has died down as its energy has been completely consumed, while an Extinction indicates a situation where the fewest traces are left to be seen and the weakest energy exists, only to bear a new Fetus, thus the beginning of a new cycle.

(4) Moon Build (Li and Shu 2019, 86)

Next to Day Time, Moon Build represents the second biggest power the matter being divined is faced with in the physical environment. It is decided by how the FPs of the hexagram unfold against the backdrop of the EB that happens to be on duty in the month of its begetting. The Phase that is mostly promoted in favor of the Moon Build generates a power called *wàng* (旺) for prosperity and brilliance. What comes in second place exerts a power called *xiāng* (相) for the match. Yet another Agent would assume a smaller power of *xiū* (休) for retiring. There is also a Phase set against the Moon Build and hence attributed to a meek power called *qióu* (囚) for imprisonment, and a fifth Agent bestowed upon with no power at

all because it is suppressed by the Moon Build, a status named *si* (死) for death.

(5) *Six Kin Types* (Ruoti 2011, 58)

Combined with the Five Phases and the pair of Day Time and Moon Build is yet another analogous sign system of the Six Kin types. Among them, the sign of Parents refers to all relationships in which a person or thing gets protected unconditionally, such as those between parents and children, teachers and students, farmers and crops, caretakers and their valuables, etc. Official-Ghost refers to relationships that pressurize, suppress, and control a person or frighten a person, such as those with bosses, disaster, disease, etc. Offspring refers to relationships that can generate good things such as medicine, safety, literature, art, etc. Brother represents power struggles involved in asymmetrical interpersonal relations like extra-marital affairs and examination. Wife-Wealth is similar to Offspring but emphasizes what a person wants to directly possess or control in a relationship, such as money, wealth, and partners. Using symbols prevailing in the Chinese organization of familial kinship, the first five Kin Types (KTs) can be understood intuitively, yet the last pair of World and Reaction needs further description. These two are symmetrical yet reversed concepts, like an object and its mirrored image. On one hand, World refers to what self-image the moral subject in question maintains in front of people in the world, whereas, Reaction refers to how other people look at him reversely, a viewpoint that might run counter to the moral subject's. All these KT's come together to bestow meanings on the *yáo* lines of the hexagram and hence place the latter in an imaginary web of social relationships for further interpretation.

(6) *Four Deities* (Zhou 2021, 115-118)

The KT's do not work on themselves, they have to be paired with a quartet of Deities. The basic technique unfolds as follows. First, bestow SKTs upon six *yáo* lines in accordance with their FP attributions. Then designate one *yáo*, also one KT, that corresponds to what is being asked about to be the Use Deity (*yòng shén*用神), and another kin-typical *yáo* to be its benefactor, or Original Deity (*yuán shén*原神), and likewise Taboo Deity (*jì shén*忌神), suppressor of Use Deity, and Hate Deity (*chóu shén*仇神), benefactor of Taboo Deity.

The method of analysis is to first look at whether DT and MB are helpful to the Use Deity, which determines whether the matter in divination is an advantage or disadvantage in the environment. DT and MB represent the power of the external environment, and when the power supports the Use Deity and Original Deity, the matter in divination





is supported by the environment. However, if the Use Deity and Original Deity are suppressed by the environment and the power of the Taboo Deity with Hate Deity is greater than that of the Use Deity plus Original Deity, the possibility of success is very low, owing to the high external difficulties.

(7) *Six Beasts* (Xinghai 2016, 19)

Six Beasts is an auxiliary system to the FPs, which represents the power from the constellations in the sky in the form of six divine animals serving under the emperor star, namely the Polaris. Once a *yáo* line of the hexagram is attributed to a KT, it further falls onto one of the Six Beasts. The Six Beasts include an azure dragon (*qīnglóng* 青龍), which means benevolence and light; a vermilion bird (*zhūquè* 朱雀), representing diplomacy and eloquence; a lion-like guardian named *gōuchén* (勾陳), representing professionalism and honesty; a two-headed flying snake (*téngshé* 騰蛇), symbolizing greed and wordiness; a white tiger (*báihǔ* 白虎), representing force or violence, which exerts power on behalf of the Polaris; and a black turtle *xuánwǔ* (玄武), representing cunningness. Given the different characters of the Beasts, this falling upon surely enriches the interpretation of the hexagram and hence the prediction of one's fortunes and misfortunes.

(8) *Hexagram, yáo lines, and the active yáo* (Ruoti 2017, 129-136)

To begin with, the diviner has to prepare three coins of one kind, with the head being the light (*yáng* 陽) and the tail the dark (*yīn* 陰), the two sides of the Great Ultimate (*tàijí* 太極). Ask the question you want to divine about piously in your mind. Shake hands to let coins clash with each other within them, in the same way as *yīn* and *yáng* keep interacting to create all things under heaven. Open palms to let the coins fall. Check them for the combination of heads and tails to decide what kind of the first *yáo* you have got (Huang 2013, 51-53).

Two heads and one tail facing up produce a young *yáng* (少陽), transcribed as an unbroken line . Two tails and one head, on the other hand, give you a young *yīn* (少陰), transcribed as a broken line . Three heads mean old *yáng*, transcribed as an unbroken line plus a circle  meaning a *yáng yáo* (陽爻) in its extreme; while three tails mean old *yīn*, transcribed as a broken line plus a cross  denoting a *yīn yáo* (陰爻) in its extreme. However, a *yáo* in its extreme, once begotten, is subject to change, hence the term *dòng yáo* (動爻) or active line, on one hand, and the new *yáo* it changes into is then called *biàn yáo* (變爻), a changed line, on the other. Active *yáo* plays a more important part in Liu's



model of mantic practice as it represents the changing power of the social network, represented by the six kin-typical yáo lines, imposing on the individual/matter in question (Huang 2015, 95; Nan 2022, 62).

### 3. The Practice and Interpretation of divination on COVID-19

By using the method of *wúxíngyì* and with the question “how will the pandemic unfold in country A in 2021?” in mind and begot a hexagram and its variation as shown in Table 2 below.

TABLE 2. The hexagram begotten for prophesying about COVID-19

Divination date: October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020. Chinese Calendar Year of *geng-ZI* (庚子), the month of *Xū* (MB), day of *Xū* (戊戌)(DT)

The Energy of the FPs according to MB: Prosperity for Earth, matching for Metal, retiring for Fire, imprisoning for Wood, death for Water.

order of yáo	Palace		zhèn震(meaning shock)		zhèn震	
	Six Beasts	Deity	KT EB FP	Yáo lines	KT EB FP	Yáo lines
six	Vermilion Bird	Original	Wife-Wealth xū Earth		Wife-Wealth xū Earth	
five	Azure Dragon	Use	Officer-Ghost shēn Metal		Officer-Ghost shēn Metal	
fourth	Black Turtle	Taboo	Offspring wǔ Fire		Offspring wǔ Fire	
third	White Tiger	Taboo	Offspring wǔ Fire	→	Officer-Ghost yǒu Metal	
second	Flying Snake	Original	Wife-Wealth chén Earth	Reaction	Parent hài Water	

first	<i>Gouchen</i>	Hate	Brother yín Wood	■■■■	Wife- Wealth chǒu Earth	■■■■
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Table 2 shows the begotten hexagram and its variation produced by an active *yáo* at the third line. Firstly, the combinations of the Beasts and the KT's at the first two columns of the table revealed how the pandemic evolves in country A. The first beast Vermilion Bird was paired with Wife-Wealth, the EB *xū*, and Earth of the FP's. Vermilion Bird represents diplomacy and eloquence which highlights extensive use of the mouth, whereas Wife-Wealth represents food or sightseeing. From them, we could know that the cause of the pandemic spreading is tourism and catering, which were also among the first industries to be hit hard by the pandemic, as the paired EB *xū* stands for the withering and chilling atmosphere of the autumn (see Table 1 above).

The second beast was Azure Dragon paired with Officer-Ghost, the EB *shēn*, and Metal. Azure Dragon is among the noblest gods that, according to Taoist teachings, dominate the world. This connotation, plus Officer-Ghost's power of life or death over people, arguably pointed to the increasing fatalities brought about by the coronavirus. Azure Dragon also refers to daytime brightness, which could be said to indicate that the virus was mainly spread through activities such as traveling and paying visits during daytime hours. The EB *shēn* and the Metal, according to the theory of *wūxíng*, both suggest change, which corresponded to the ever-evolving nature of the virus itself.

Next, the third Beast, turtle *Xuanwu*, represents night and unusual measures. Paired with the EB *wǔ*, Offspring, and Fire, it suggested that there might be some industry or political players who took advantage of the affair by stealthily developing or monopolizing medical resources including vaccines, or that some measures had to be taken so hurriedly that medical ethics which should have come first is in effect compromised.

The fourth beast, White Tiger, signifies a domineering might that causes bloody incidents. When combined with Offspring, it could stand for medical treatment as the latter was traditionally related to blood. However, as the third *yáo* line changed from a *yīn* to a *yáng*, the beast also got a new company which was the notorious Officer-Ghost and hence predicted that lots of fatalities were unavoidable in the process of developing and using the vaccines.

This situation was to worsen as we moved to the next beast, Flying Snake. A sinister god itself and combined with what one dearly wants as shown by the KT Wife-Wealth, it represented some folk remedies that people took, only to prolong the pandemic.

Last but not the least, the lion-like beast *Gouchen* on the first *yáo* line came with the KT of Brother on which the anti-COVID Hate Deity falls. As

*Gouchen* stands for techniques from ancient times and Brother indicates competitive relationships, this combination arguably showed Chinese medicine can compete with its modern western counterpart in keeping the virus in check.

According to *wǔxíngyì*, when there is a changed hexagram, the original hexagram will be reduced to representing only the first stages of the matter in question. As for the fortunes and misfortunes to come, one has to look at the changed hexagram instead. Now, not only were there two *yáo*s of metal in the new hexagram, but the third *yáo*, with its *yǒu*/metal attribute, also was more ready to receive the energy from the Day Time and Moon Build. What's worse, this *yáo* happened on the Tiger, a notorious augury of conflicts and disasters, which undoubtedly topped up the ferocity and violence of the COVID-19 pandemic.

What was offered above was an overall interpretation of the lines of the hexagrams. In fact, a diachronic interpretation in which events unfold over time was also made possible by them and their symbolic framework. From top to bottom, with the 6th *yáo* being the farthest and earliest occurrence and the first *yáo* was the latest back in time, we could reconstruct the timeline of the pandemic as it were. To begin with, the fact that the people traveled freely as shown by the Wife-Wealth, contributed to the spread of the new coronavirus in country A, which was pointed out by the following KT of Official-Ghost. What followed was the government decided to close traffic within and without the borders for bringing back safety and well-being, which echoed with the first Offspring. The second Offspring then denoted effort put into the development of medical means and services, including screenings, vaccines, and treatments, to fight against the outbreak. Considering the huge impact of multiple shutdowns on the economy and social life, the state had to lower the COVID alert level again, allowing for more of what the second Wife-Wealth stood for, i.e., consumers' economic activities. At the same time, huge amounts of money were spent on purchasing vaccines from other countries, which are represented by the KT of Brother on the first *yáo* at the bottom.

#### **4. Insight form the divination: Freedom of choice under the COVID-19 pandemic**

Liu Bowen believed that his *wǔxíngyì* divination offers a comprehensive analysis of the circumstances in which the matter and/or the subject in question is enveloped. As a tool for comprehending the environment, the analysis helps the diviner or other parties involved in terms of choosing from a range of possibilities and opportunities. However, one question leaps to the eye: What kind of freedom of choice do we have here, given that it's almost impossible to do away with the

connotation of causality or linearity inherent in the Induction thesis that has long haunted the Chinese mind since the Han dynasty in 100 BC?

This is, we argued, where the synchronistic principle kicks in: Since Heaven and the Heavenly Will are beyond human's wits, one can only rely on the acausal, nonlinear juxtapositions of the mundane object-concepts as synchronic events, those "falling-together-in-times", to claim, among other things, his prophesying abilities. Put reversely, it is only through this implicit mystic way that Heaven would bestow His power and visions on the Man. This ambiguity plays down the deterministic, if not fatalistic, significances of divination while leaving the Man with a certain room for freedom of choice, within which he can pursue the maximal utility of his decisions relative to future actions and behaviors.

From the point of view of utilitarianism, there are two major ways to produce the greatest good in the form of happiness and well-being for the affected individuals (Lyons 1965). Rule utilitarians, on one hand, believe that it can only be maximized by everyone following a moral rule that has proven correct. For act utilitarians, on the other, a person's act is morally right if and only if it produces the best possible results in that specific situation. Both are effective in the *wǔxíngyì* divination. The thesis of the correct rules responds to the very basis of its interpretative framework, while the situation-dependent production of good belongs with the interpretations of each *yáo* line.

Relevant to the prediction about COVID-19, to begin with, was Liu's (2015, 158-159) delineation of how the categories of SKTs work hand in hand with prophesying country A's future.

**Parents** referred to the development of culture and education, including the energy from the intellectual elite.

**Brothers** referred to energy produced by the conflict between the rich and the poor, the right and the wrong, and so on. Used in the right way, it created the country's competitiveness and thus facilitates Offspring, while abusing it suppressed Wife/Wealth, meaning the country was overshadowed by neighboring countries, as in the case of diplomatic and economic sanctions.

**Offspring** signified the tacit power of arts and peace, a power contributive to the country's economy. It owned the ability to beget Wife/Wealth and to overpower Officer/Ghost.

**Wife/Wealth** referred to the financial health of a country, including its cash reserve ratio and foreign exchange reserves. If it goes with the *yáo* of World, it meant that the leader put great emphasis on economic development.

**Officer/Ghost** represented disastrous forces and therefore that of self-restraint of the imperial will itself.

**World** referred to the basic condition of the country and its leader's ability and work style. It also included the relation between the leader and his aids.

**Response** referred to the diplomatic situation in which the country was currently faced with.

These categories globally delineated the moral rules that country A's decision-makers could follow in pursuit of the greatest good for the people. In our case of fighting COVID-19, the decision-makers were advised to lock the country down to foreign tourists and the like, as the *yáo* of Reply as a KT falls on that of Officer-Ghost, meaning foreigners will bring devastating power to this country. They were also discouraged from confronting the virus directly with vaccination respectively in the eighth and ninth months of the Chinese calendar as they are governed by the Metal Agent paired with the Officer-Ghost as shown in the third and fifth *yáo* lines of the changed hexagram. On the other hand, the fourth and fifth months would be the best time to roll out new vaccines to contain the disease as the power induced by Offspring would dominate this period which worked to prevail over Officer-Ghost. Whether to enforce the categorical moral rules or to behave as their local and perhaps conflicting manifestations suggest was a question a decision-maker must find the answer to.

In practices of divination, people use what Jung calls the principle of synchronicity and what ancient Chinese describes as the medium of *qi* to communicate with the collective unconscious of mankind. The collective unconscious possesses experiences and memories inherited from human ancestors, which can be presented through divination activities as synchronistic phenomena in the form of signs and symbols and then associated with the object-concepts in the physical outer world, revealing a kind of truth as opposed to the scientific rational one. According to it, things do not have to happen because of some common cause to be inherently connected; instead, they can happen simultaneously for a certain meaning, as illustrated in this paper by the juxtapositions of different object-concepts in the interpretative framework of a hexagram.

All this is somewhat reserved in the minds of common people of Chinese descent to date, influencing their conception about and attitude towards the social and political relationships between citizens and governments. When faced with the parallel and alternative truths of this world, to bring the greatest benefit to mankind, especially during a rough time like today, people need to be aware of the constraints the environments place on them as well as the freedom they might embrace to make political decisions. This, according to Jung, requires us to collect information using the senses of time and space, the law of causal effect, and the synchronistic principle as well. Liu's *wúxíngyì* provides a philosophical system just for such a mission, whose significance in modern times, we hope, has been primarily explored in this paper, and whose legacy is yet to be carried forward.

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