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## The Unity of Architectonic Reasoning in Kant and I Ching

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## 64. The Unity of Architectonic Reasoning in Kant and *I Ching*

*Stephen R. Palmquist*

Human reason is by nature architectonic, i. e., it considers all cognitions as belonging to a possible system, and hence it permits only such principles as at least do not render an intended cognition incapable of standing together with others in some system or other.<sup>1</sup>

The unity of human personhood in Kant's philosophical system is not incompatible with a belief in the duality of human nature, nor with an appreciation of the fragmented nature of our empirical existence. He portrays human beings as belonging simultaneously to both the phenomenal and the noumenal "worlds", as being causally determined by events in the *natural* world that we cannot control, yet having the spontaneous power to initiate freely chosen actions that constitute a *moral* world. Likewise, he makes numerous finer distinctions between various types or aspects of human character or personality throughout the three *Critiques*, as well as in his minor writings, lectures, and notes. As the foregoing essays demonstrate, we find in each *Critique* and throughout Kant's writings a sometimes mesmerizing array of distinctions regarding our nature as human beings, yet each *Critique* is united by its focus on one of three central questions (A805/B833): "1. What can I know? 2. What should I do? 3. What may I hope?" Moreover, these questions are united by one question that combines them all: "What is man?"

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<sup>1</sup> A474/B502. For a thoroughgoing discussion of Kant's use of the term "architectonic" and of the nature and structure of the architectonic plan he used to structure the Critical System, see my books, *Kant's System of Perspectives: An architectonic interpretation of the Critical philosophy* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1993), ch. III, and *Kant's Critical Religion: Volume Two of Kant's System of Perspectives* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), apx.III.2–3.

(9:25)—a deceptively simple question that seems to call for one, all-encompassing answer.

Kant's clue as to how we can, paradoxically, both believe in the fundamental *unity* of human personhood and acknowledge the seemingly endless "aggregate" of unorganized facts that characterizes our human nature is that Critical philosophers must employ a special kind of thinking he calls "architectonic". My purpose in this essay is not to describe how architectonic thinking manifests itself in all Kant's intricate theories of human personhood—that task has already been fulfilled by the many insightful essays contained in this collection. Rather, after discussing Kant's special, architectonic approach to philosophical reasoning and its systematic relation to the twelve categories, I shall suggest that the same approach can be found, in its essential nature though not in its detailed out-working, in the oldest and arguably the most influential of all Chinese classics, the *I Ching*. If I am correct, then the "Chinaman of Konigsberg"<sup>2</sup> was even more authentically Chinese than either he or Nietzsche realized.

The *I Ching* or *Book of Changes*, as it is sometimes called, is essentially a set of commentaries on sixty-four unique hexagrams that are each constructed out of six broken or solid lines. Because each line can appear in only two forms (broken or solid) and each component of the system contains exactly six such lines, the sixty-four hexagrams represent *all possible* permutations of any system exhibiting this logical form. This is true for the simple, mathematical reason that  $2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2$  (i. e.,  $2^6$ ) is 64. The Chinese classic interprets each hexagram as a symbol representing a certain human situation or type of situation, based on its unique arrangement of broken and solid lines. Those who use the *I Ching* as a guideline for decision-making (or, more crassly, as a tool for divining the future) adopt this set of 64 logical relations as an *a priori* framework by randomly choosing two of the 64 hexagrams and viewing them as a symbolic representation of the *change* being exhibited by some situation they wish to understand more fully. Mastering the *I Ching* requires one to learn the nuances of 4,096 (i. e.,  $64 \times 64$ ) mathematically possible types of situational change generated by the logic of this system. Although I am still a novice in this regard, I shall illustrate at the end of this essay how such applications might operate as a practical, architectonic guideline.

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2 I assess the legitimacy of viewing Kant as taking a "Chinese" approach in "How 'Chinese' Was Kant?" (abridged), *The Philosopher* 84:1 (Spring 1996), 3–9.

An intriguing feature of this ancient framework for interpreting human experience is that it all arises from a fundamental *unity*, called the Dao (though the Dao paradoxically also underlies the very distinction between unity and diversity). As expressed in the well-known lines from section 42 of Lao Tzu's *Dao De Jing*:<sup>3</sup>

DAO generates the One  
 The One generates the Two  
 The Two generates the Three  
 The Three generates all things.

Reading these lines in connection with their roots in the *I Ching* provides an excellent expression of the book's underlying assumption, that unity and diversity are not necessarily incompatible concepts, but can work together to elucidate how we experience human life as a coherent whole.

This well-known passage has some interesting implications for the question of how the unity of human personhood can coexist with the diversity of life as we experience it; but what has any of this to do with Kant? It has to do with Kant because he famously (or by some accounts, infamously) insists that philosophers ought *not* interpret the world in the manner of Aristotle, by merely collecting data from our observations of the world and inductively classifying these according to some likely set of conclusions, but should rather *impose order* onto our subject-matter through a predetermined principle of division that *we give* to the system of concepts we employ.<sup>4</sup> The *Dao* on its own is a name for undifferentiated wholeness, not unlike Kant's "thing in itself". We come to *know* it as "one", "two", "three", and eventually "all things", only by imposing our mental categorizations (the 64-hexa-

3 Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching: The Book of Meaning and Life*, tr. Richard Wilhelm and H. G. Ostwald (London: Arkana, 1985), 46.

4 For a good account of the tendency among early twentieth century Kant scholars to blame all the infelicities one sees in Kant's writings on his architectonic superstructure, see Paula Manchester, "What Kant Means by Architectonic" *Kant und die Berliner Aufklärung: Akten des IX. Internationalen Kant-Kongresses*, Bd. II (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2001), 622–30. Manchester's own interpretation of Kant's view of architectonic is, however, unfortunately clouded by her overly Aristotelian reading of Kant's usage, combined with an overemphasis on the significance of Kant's reference to the "teaching" of reason in connection with architectonic. As I shall demonstrate, Kant explicitly *contrasts* his position with Aristotle's "aggregate" approach, so it seems highly unlikely that he saw himself as merely refining the same meaning Aristotle gave to this term.

grams, in classical Chinese traditions) onto it. This—dare I say?—*Kantian* aspect of philosophical Daoism might go unnoticed if we interpret it apart from its relation to the *I Ching*. Likewise, Kant's unified answer to the “What is man?” question is likely to remain obscure if we do not recognize how his table of twelve categories originates as a presupposition of architectonic reasoning. Let us therefore look first at chapter III of *CPR's* Transcendental Doctrine of Method, where Kant explains what he means by “architectonic”, then examine how he provides early hints concerning this important philosophical method in the untitled introductory section of chapter I of the Transcendental Analytic, where he explicitly refers to the “clue” that leads to the discovery of the categories.

In chapter III of *Kant's System of Perspectives*<sup>5</sup> I have presented in great detail the multi-layered structure of Kant's so-called “architectonic plan” for constructing his philosophical system, arguing throughout the rest of the book that commentators who misunderstand and prematurely reject Kant's theories typically do so because they fail to appreciate how his various arguments contribute to this plan as a whole. After being criticized by Paula Manchester for misunderstanding Kant's use of the term “architectonic”,<sup>6</sup> I wrote a detailed reply, in appendix III.2 of *Kant's Critical Religion*,<sup>7</sup> presenting a more explicit account of what Kant means by this key term. Without repeating all the details of those two studies, I shall here summarize the key features of Kant's position.

Kant begins the Architectonic chapter with this intriguing definition: “By an **architectonic** I understand the art of systems. Since systematic unity is that which first makes ordinary cognition into science, i. e., makes a system out of a mere aggregate of it, architectonic is the

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5 For the full text of *Kant's System*, see <http://www.hkbu.edu.hk/~ppp/ksp1>.

6 Manchester views Kant's “architectonic” as essentially following Aristotle's use of the special Greek term, *architektôn* (Manchester, 524n). After reviewing the history of different uses of this term, she assumes Kant must have been writing within this Greek tradition; unfortunately, she never presents such a thorough analysis of the distinctive way *Kant himself* uses the term, especially in light of his explicit contrast between his view of how to construct a table of categories and that of Aristotle (see note 4, above). Manchester and I debated this issue at a special session of the 1998 World Congress of Philosophy, but without reaching agreement.

7 For the full text of *Kant's Critical Religion*, see <http://www.hkbu.edu.hk/~ppp/ksp2>.

doctrine of that which is scientific in our cognition in general” (A832/B860). Here we see Kant connecting architectonic with system-making, apparently hinting at a metaphor between the roles of the architect and the philosopher. Just as an architect’s job is to design or “make the plan” for a building, the architectonic philosopher’s task is to make *systems* by imposing order onto the “mere aggregate” (i. e., the unorganized data) that otherwise characterizes our experience of the empirical world. Perhaps the most intriguing aspect suggested by this passage is that Kant calls architectonic an “art”, even though it is at the same time, somewhat paradoxically, the formal factor that makes a body of knowledge *scientific*. He then adds that reason *prescribes laws* that unify “the manifold cognitions under one idea” (A832/B860). This idea, he tells us, is “the rational concept of the form of a whole” that determines both “the domain of the manifold” and “the positions of the parts with respect to each other”. That is, the task of architectonic reasoning is to *determine the relation* between the otherwise unrelated parts of a transcendental system’s form.

Two sentences later Kant again emphasizes this relational aspect. Apparently, he had an architectonic reason for placing this chapter *third* in the Doctrine of Method: it fulfills a function that corresponds to the category of relation in his Table of Categories. As I argue in chapter VII of *Kant’s System of Perspectives*, the component of the Doctrine of Elements that functions as the architectonic structuring plan is the categories, applied in the schematized form of the principles of pure understanding. Here in the Doctrine of Method, Kant therefore appears to be alluding to a necessary connection between the formal structure of the categories and that of all architectonic reasoning. If this interpretation is accurate, then why did Kant not simply come out and state that architectonic reasoning uses the table of categories (or its predecessor, the table of the logical forms of judgment in thought) to impose systematic patterns onto our thought processes? The reason, I believe, is bound up with Kant’s strategy in dividing the *Critiques* into Doctrines of Elements and Method. In each *Critique* with this division, the two sections are meant to be *independent* of each other, in the sense that they work toward the same goal, but from opposite perspectives: content first, then form. None of the chapters in the Doctrine of Method appeal directly to the results of the Doctrine of Elements, or vice versa; rather, they each reveal in different ways reason’s *need* for just the sort of thing the foregoing Doctrine of Elements has provided. To connect architectonic in chapter III of the Doctrine of Method too explicitly with the

$4 \times 3 = 12$  pattern determined by the categories in the Doctrine of Elements would have been to beg the question he was attempting to answer. To *name* the categories or even their numerical structure would have been to focus on the *content* of the preferred architectonic plan; but Kant's focus in the Doctrine of Method is on the proper *form* of philosophical reasoning, a form that could be different for different philosophers.

The second paragraph of the Architectonic also states that the *purpose* of imposing onto the aggregate of our knowledge an idea that relates the parts to each other within a whole is to “support and advance [reason’s] essential ends” (A832/B860). Kant unfortunately does not explain what he means by this phrase. However, the remainder of the paragraph suggests he is thinking here of reason’s ultimate goal, the *unification* of all knowledge; for he claims this prescriptive function of reason (i. e., reason’s architectonic unity) “allows the absence of any part to be noticed in our knowledge of the rest,” so that “there can be no contingent addition ... that does not have its boundaries determined *a priori*” (A832–3/B860–1), thus guaranteeing the completeness of the system being constructed. In the Doctrine of Elements, the only tool Kant develops for achieving such lofty aims is his choice to pattern his systematic divisions on the formal structure established by the tables of categories and logical functions. Perhaps hinting at his own earlier usage, he concludes this paragraph of the Doctrine of Method by comparing a rational system’s potential to “grow internally ... but not externally” (i. e., to be “articulated” rather than “heaped together”) to that of “an animal body” (A833/B861). This metaphor is easily understood as referring to Kant’s conviction that, when constructing a table of categories in reference to any set of conceptual relations, we must resist the temptation to add a single new member (e. g.,  $4 + 1 = 5$ ), for this destroys the logical unity of the conceptual relations under consideration. Instead, we must account for any new members by making further *internal* divisions, just as Kant does when he divides each category into three “moments” ( $4 \times 3 = 12$ ).

The third paragraph contains the next two references to “architectonic”. It begins by distinguishing between two ways of relating a *schema* and an *idea*. Viewed empirically, the schema presents the manifold of knowledge to us independently of any unifying idea, whereas from reason’s *a priori* perspective, the schema “arises only in consequence of an idea ... and does not await them empirically” (A833/B861). The latter alone, Kant states, “grounds **architectonic** unity.” One of the main

differences between these two forms of relation is that when viewing the schema “empirically”, we cannot know the “number [of its aims] ... in advance”; but science requires certainty in its distinctions and so must impose them *a priori*—that is, “architectonically, for the sake of its affinity and its derivation from a single supreme and inner end” (A833–4/B861–2). This passage provides clear evidence that the *a priori* unity imposed on the aggregate by reason’s architectonic art has to do with the  $4 \times 3 = 12$  pattern of the categories. For Kant’s point is precisely that reason’s architectonic form (as revealed in the categories) enables us to do what would be impossible if we were to use a merely empirical method: to *determine the appropriate number* that composes any given set of concepts. Reason’s ability to discern the pattern in advance is the source of the affinity of the manifold’s parts in an architectonic system.

The fourth paragraph warns the reader that, although the founder of every new science bases it on an idea, the initial attempt to *schematize* that idea “seldom corresponds to the idea; for this idea lies in reason like a seed” (A834/B862). As a result, Kant encourages us to be willing to go beyond the descriptions given by the founders and first proponents of any new science, for they “often fumble around with an idea that they have not even made distinct to themselves”; our focus should instead be on the idea and its grounding in reason. This accords well with my articulation of the logical structure of the architectonic form of Kant’s System, given in chapter III of *Kant’s System of Perspectives*. If Kant is to avoid being hypocritical, he would have to confess that he, too, like the founder of any new science, had only a vague grasp of the “idea of the whole” that brought unity and completeness to his System of transcendental philosophy. (My goal in *Kant’s System of Perspectives* was to apply this advice of Kant’s to the task of interpreting the architectonic structure of his own System.)

The next three occurrences of “architectonic(ally)”, coming in the fifth paragraph of chapter III, do not tell us anything fundamentally new about Kant’s understanding of the term. The paragraph begins by lamenting that systems are typically constructed initially as aggregates, and that “only after we have long collected relevant cognitions haphazardly like building materials” does it first become “possible for us to glimpse the idea in a clearer light and to outline a whole architectonically, in accordance with the ends of reason” (A834–5/B862–3). (The fact that Kant made essentially the same point in the so-called Metaphysical Deduction [A79–81/B105–7], in criticizing Aristotle’s meth-

od of collecting categories, provides yet further evidence that the table of categories is Kant's most complete expression of the formal structure he prefers when employing architectonic reasoning.) After likening the development of aggregate systems to the work of "maggots" (A835/B863), he claims that "so much material has already been collected" in relation to human cognition that giving "an architectonic to all human knowledge ... would not only be possible but would not even be very difficult." He then says the remainder of the chapter will merely outline "the **architectonic** of all cognition from **pure reason**".

Without looking any further into the details of the Doctrine of Method's Architectonic chapter,<sup>8</sup> let us now turn to the Doctrine of Elements, to chapter I of the Transcendental Analytic, where Kant first introduces his perplexing "clue to the discovery of all pure concepts of the understanding" (A66/B91). In the short (untitled) introductory section, Kant explicitly compares the "mechanical" method of attempting to find completeness among the manifold concepts that arise out of our observations of the world with the special method adopted by the transcendental philosopher. The former method is the one Aristotle used to gather and present his list of categories; such "concepts that are discovered only as the opportunity arises will not reveal any order and systematic unity, but will rather be ordered in pairs only according

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8 From this point much of chapter III consists of a series of twofold divisions of reason and/or philosophy, intended to provide the reader with a bird's eye view of the architectonic form of transcendental philosophy. We can skip over the details of Kant's exposition, not only because the various divisions appear at times to be somewhat incompatible with each other, but also because they are advanced as *examples* of architectonic divisions, not as further explications of the meaning of the term as such. Instead of recounting the details of each division, we can pass on to Kant's final use of "architectonic" in *CPR*. Six paragraphs before the end of chapter III, immediately after summarizing "the entire system of metaphysics" in terms of "four main parts" (A846/B874), Kant reaffirms several aspects of the meaning of "architectonic" I am defending here (A847/B875): "The original idea of a philosophy of pure reason itself prescribes this division; it is therefore **architectonic**, in conformity with its essential ends ...; and for that very reason [this division] is unchangeable and legislative." Once again we see that this term entails that reason has *prescribed* a *division* (i. e.,  $4 = 2 \div 2$ ) "in conformity with its essential ends"; because it conforms to reason's ends (i. e., to the categories as applied in the principles), this division can be regarded as authoritative and "unchangeable". Kant also uses the term "architectonic" in a number of his other writings; for a further discussion of these references, see Appendix III.3 of *Kant's Critical Religion*.

to similarities . . . , from the simple to the more composite” (A66–7/B91–2). By contrast, the latter “has the advantage but also the obligation to seek its concepts in accordance with a principle”; Kant thus adopts this approach to produce a table of categories consisting of concepts that “spring pure and unmixed, out of the understanding, *as absolute unity*” (A67/B92, emphasis added). The resulting table illustrates the correct procedure for architectonic philosophizing, while that procedure constitutes the “clue” to understanding why Kant thinks the twelvefold table of categories is complete in the *form* he presents it. Adopting such a predetermined, architectonic plan is the only way to avoid a situation where the choice of basic concepts depends merely “upon whim or chance.”<sup>9</sup>

I shall now conclude with some further reflections on the *I Ching*, based on an experimental application of the latter to the thesis advanced in this essay, that the unity of the *I Ching* is also based on a predetermined, *a priori* form. At the risk of appearing foolish to any interpreters who are not yet convinced that one *must* take into account Kant’s belief in the architectonic nature of correct philosophical reasoning, if we are to interpret his philosophical doctrines accurately, I shall treat the *I Ching* as itself offering us an architectonic plan (though its form is clearly different, based on 2<sup>6</sup> rather than on 3x4) and will “ask” it a specific question about the unity of architectonic reasoning. By randomly selecting two hexagrams in the manner mentioned at the beginning of this essay, I hope to shed further light (or cast further doubt) on the usefulness of architectonic reasoning.

An interesting characteristic about the *I Ching* is that it *appears* to be based on chance. For example, at 3am on the night before the Kant in Asia conference began, I used sixteen colored marbles to select one of the 64 hexagrams, while thinking about the following question:

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9 A67/B92. These two methods are aptly illustrated by an example Kant provides in the Second Preface of *Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason*, where he says reason and Scripture should have “not only compatibility but also unity” (6:13, tr. Pluhar, 2009). For an overview of how Kant’s architectonic pattern applies to the text of this book, see my “Introduction” to Pluhar’s translation (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2009). Exactly how this “unity” arises (or might arise) is a question Kant does not clearly answer in that context. But if we understand the way architectonic reasoning operates, the problem of the unity of “the religion of reason” with empirical religious ideas can be easily solved. See Love’s essay (ch. 42, above) for a discussion of how this relates to the problem of religious pluralism.

“What is the likely result of an attempt to connect Kant’s theory of the unity of architectonic reasoning, as manifested in his table of categories, with the formal structure of the *I Ching*?” The immediate result of my little experiment was, indeed, random in the sense that I could have ended up selecting any one of the 64 possible combinations of marbles. One might argue that this is so different from Kantian architectonic as to be totally irrelevant. But wait. Kantian categories do not remove the randomness and contingencies of our day-to-day experience; they only help us understand how the diversity of empirical knowledge can be unified. Should we not give the *I Ching* an equal chance?

My choice of marbles ended up presenting me with hexagram 21, changing into hexagram 38. Number 21 is called “biting through”; it shows an open mouth with an obstruction. The maxim for this hexagram reads: “Energetic biting through overcomes the obstacle that prevents joining of the lips.”<sup>10</sup> This suggests that the attempt to reconcile the opposing points of view (of Kant and the *I Ching*—and ultimately, of Kant and Asian philosophy) therefore seems possible, but will require hard work. This first hexagram represents the situation I, the asker, had come from: during the several months prior to the conference I had found the need, as Convener, to “bite through” several obstacles. Significantly, the second hexagram (number 38) is called “Opposition”. While this may appear to be not very auspicious, we should not make such an assumption too hastily. At one level, it seems almost as if the message conveyed by this hexagram ended up predicting the future: after the conference, a colleague whose preferences I had “bitten through” opposed me so strongly that he lodged a formal complaint against me. However, the question I asked the *I Ching* was not personal; so let us instead consider this deeply Kantian message that happens to be conveyed by the commentary on hexagram 38:

In general, opposition appears as an obstruction, but when it represents polarity within a comprehensive whole, it has also its useful and important functions. The oppositions of heaven and earth, spirit and nature, man and woman, when reconciled, bring about the creation and reproduction of life. In the world of visible things, the principle of opposites makes possible the differentiation by categories through which order is brought into the world.<sup>11</sup>

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10 *I Ching or Book of Changes*, the Richard Wilhelm translation, tr. Cary F. Baynes (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1951), 148.

11 *I Ching*, 148.

Just how different is this use of architectonic reasoning from that adopted by Kant? Clearly, they are not the same. But we should not expect them to be identical, given that the *I Ching* predates Kant by several thousand years. Kant's employment of the categories served as a transcendental basis for understanding the modern scientific and religious worldview (see note 9, above). The *I Ching* did (and does) nothing of the kind, for empirical science was (at best) in its infancy when the system of 64 hexagrams was first conceived. Nevertheless, it does exemplify a *method of thinking* that is remarkably similar to Kant's. Kant's predetermined divisions in philosophy (especially the categories) *lead us* into insights about science and religion, just as the random selection of hexagrams, when interpreted as a predetermined set of symbols describing 64x64 life situations, can often lead us into remarkable insights about how to understand any given life situation.

The paradox we face when attempting to employ architectonic reasoning also constitutes what is arguably the single most dangerous temptation faced by philosophers (or by anyone thinking philosophically). We always have the tendency to believe that our structured understanding of the nature of reality (or of any given situation) represents the absolute truth. It is no accident, perhaps, that the *I Ching's* reputation has been spoiled in so many circles: the hexagrams are often used explicitly for divination, as if we human beings could know the future simply by casting yarrow sticks (or grabbing marbles out of a bag). Yet if we resist this temptation, employing architectonic reasoning without forgetting that we have created the structures in the first place, then it can be the source of great wisdom and insight. In such uses, we actually are "divining the truth" by imposing an architectonic structure onto the empirical aggregate. Without adopting this approach, we can never hope to find unity in the midst of our diverse efforts to cultivate personhood. Yet the lesson of Kant's Critical philosophy is that (as aptly expressed by my friend Guy Lown, one of the participants in the Kant in Asia conference, in a discussion we had on this topic just as I was finalizing this collection of essays) even though the purpose of architectonic systems is to *divine the structure of reality*, we must learn to do this *without* regarding the outcome of our reasoning as divine. I can think of no better way of realizing this goal than by observing (architectonic reasoning being but one of many examples of) how Kant's ideas are alive in Asia and Asian ideas resonate in Kant.