Cognitive Adaptation of the I Ching Conditions for the Existentially Challenged

Introduction

The following exercise is an adaptation of portions of texts offering a sense of the above "conditions of change" in various domains as previously presented (Transformation Metaphors derived experimentally from the Chinese Book of Changes (I Ching) -- for sustainable dialogue, vision, conferencing, policy, network, community and lifestyle, 1997). The intent of this adaptation is however to highlight the "cognitive weather conditions" of the increasing numbers of people faced with conditions of despair, depression, nothingness, and the like (as listed in a subsequent section below). With this concern, the wording in the earlier exercises appeared to lack this sense of angst -- although the Chinese original claims specifically to frame the relationship between fundamental conditions of uncertainty and the associated decision-making dilemmas.

As noted (in the main paper Interpretations of patterns of empowering and disempowering conditions), the articulation of such conditions as typically recall too readily a form of moralistic, deterministic, "motherhood statement", namely directives ("shoulds", "musts"). Although these appear unquestionably appropriate, they are readily experienced as objectionable by many in existential agony -- namely as too bland for those who are living "on the edge". The point is well made by the protest of Jack Nichols (in the movie As Good As It Gets): I am drowning here and you are describing the water. Such concerns, with similar references, are reflected to a higher degree in the compilation by Jon Jenkins and Maureen Jenkins (The Other World, in the Midst of Our World, 2001) describing 64 states of being experienced in ordinary life (see Annex 3: Comprehensive Pattern of Psychosocial Diseases and the Eases they Imply).

The approach taken was therefore to use portions of the previous exercise for the 64 traditionally recognized conditions but to amend the text using two "devices":

- substitution of "??¿???" for the "cognitive operator" in each case
- reconfiguring each derived comment as a question in its own right

The result is far from satisfactory since it leaves the reader with the (useful) challenge of associating meaning with "??¿???" -- otherwise typically over-defined. Ideally this might imply dimensions such as:

- knowing or unknowing in the face of experiential reality, each constituting its own kind of trap (as with any assumptions relating to knowledge and ignorance, certainty and uncertainty) helpfully publicized via the notorious "poem" of Donald Rumsfeld during his capacity as US Secretary of Defense (Unknown Undoing: challenge of incomprehensibility of systemic neglect, 2008; Going Nowhere through Not-knowing Where to Go, 2013)
- attention or inattention under conditions of information overload, limited attention span, and particular preference (Investing Attention Essential to Viable Growth: radical self-reflexive reappropriation of financial skills and insights, 2014)
- a sense of information experienced as energy, and of energy experienced as information, as might be associated with feelings of cognitive empowerment or disempowerment. This could complement psychosocial understanding of energy as separately discussed (Reframing Sustainable Sources of Energy for the Future: the vital role of psychosocial variants, 2006)
- a sense of cognitive strategy as would be recognized by the streetwise, in martial arts, or in many games (most notably go and chess)
- a sense of undetermined identity, or even existence, which may well characterize the experience of many faced with dilemmas as to who they are (other than "nobody") and in what way they really exist (if that can be unequivocally assumed). Such issues can be explored in terms of radicalization, liminality, or a wave theory of being (Being a Waveform of Potential as an Experiential Choice: emergent dynamic qualities of identity and integrity, 2013; Living as an Imaginal Bridge between Worlds: global
understandings of "betwixt and between" and liminality, 2011; Radicalisation of Existence and Identity: recognizing the global emergence and influence of daimonic dynamics, 2015)

- the experience of nothing and nothingness as it might manifest with respect to 8 conditions (Configuring the Varieties of Experiential Nothingness, 2012)

Of particular interest, given the contrast with "climate" as a more enduring characteristic, is the sense in which there are likely to be cultural preferences and biases with respect to interpretations and emphases. These can be explored in the light of the articulations proposed by various authors, as summarized separately (Systems of Categories Distinguishing Cultural Biases, 1993). Most notably are the mindscapes of Masanori Maruyama (Mindscapes, social patterns and future development of scientific theory types. Cybernetica, 1980, 23, 1, pp. 5-25). The wording remains unsatisfactory, and perhaps necessarily so, if the qualities of the "cognitive weather conditions" listed thereafter are somehow to be associated with the pattern.

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1. S/S: Creative (Ch'ien) [primal power]: As a result of ??¿??, can creative energy and inspiration engender new patterns?
   - [In order to bear fruit, creativity eventually requires the existence of a receptive environment. (Resulting in: Receptivity.)]
   - sky's the limit

2. E/E: Earth (K'un) [receptivity / primal structuring]: Can ??¿?? respond to the actions and opportunities of its environment and thereby bring about change?
   - [Initiatives emerging in a receptive environment first experience difficulties. (Resulting in: Initial difficulty).]

3. A/T: Initial difficulty (Chun) [beginning growth / sprouting]: Can a cooperative response bring order out of chaos as a result of the profusion of changes being brought about by ??¿?? -- constituting confusing obstacles to its further development?
   - [When first launched, initiatives tend to be handicapped by inexperience. (Resulting in: Inexperience).]

4. M/A: Inexperience (Meng) [enveloping / clouded awareness / young shoot]: Aided by enthusiasm, can ??¿?? succeed despite inexperience, provided appropriate guidance is sought with the right attitude?
   - [After overcoming problems of inexperience, initiatives await further support. (Resulting in: Waiting).]

5. A/S: Waiting (Hao) [Awaiting / Attending / Getting wet / Nourishment]: Can ??¿?? only derive the strength to confront crises by being able to wait, however long is necessary for opportunities to emerge, rather than being panicked into action by immediate dangers?
   - [Initiatives awaiting support engender conflict over the allocation of available resources. (Resulting in: Conflict).]
   - repetitive obsession

6. S/A: Conflict (Sung) [Arguing / Dispute]: When ??¿?? encounters opposition in pursuing a course of action it considers appropriate, does conflict arise which can only be usefully resolved by coming to terms with the opponent?
   - [When there is conflict a controlled threat eventually emerges to regulate it. (Resulting in: Controlled threat).]

7. E/A: Controlled threat (Shih) [Army / Leading / Unorganized crowd]: For ??¿?? to struggle successfully, must discipline be instilled in the community by arousing enthusiasm, sustaining the people and eliciting confidence in the value of its actions?
   - [The emergence of a controlled threat eventually promotes solidarity. (Resulting in: Solidarity).]

8. A/E: Solidarity (Pi) [Grouping / Holding together / Union / Clustering phenomena]: Does complementarity of action among the different aspects of ??¿?? require that they should be held together by a central symbol whose significance reinforces each in understanding of a role within the action of the whole?
   - [Solidarity ensures a subtle restraint. (Resulting in: Subtle restraint).]

9. W/S: Subtle restraint (Hsiao Ch'u) [Taming power of the small / Small accumulating]: When the influence of ??¿?? is as yet unable to produce great or lasting effects, is it best that it should act in a restraining or subduing manner in anticipation of ultimate success?
   - [Subtle restraints give rise to careful conduct. (Resulting in: Careful conduct).]

10. S/L: Careful conduct (Lu) [Treading / Step-by-step]: Can ??¿?? best relate to those who are strong and intractable by conducting itself with due respect, reinforcing recognition of inner worth whenever it is reflected in external rank?
    - [Careful conduct ensures that peaceful relationships prevail. (Resulting in: Peace)].

11. F/S: Peace (T'ai) [Pervading]: When harmony prevails in ??¿?? and in its relationship with society, is a period of fruitful action assured? To benefit from this condition do processes need to be ordered and adjusted to increase their natural yield?
    - [If peaceful relationships continue to prevail, stagnation eventually results. (Resulting in: Stagnation).]

12. S/E: Stagnation (Pi) [Obstruction / Standstill]: Does disharmony prevailing in ??¿?? and in its relationships with society ensure an uncreative period of confusion and disorder? When the exertion of effective influence is impossible, can ??¿?? best remain faithful to its principles by withdrawing into seclusion rather than by accepting the temptation of public action?
    - [Stagnation cannot persist indefinitely and therefore fellowship finally emerges. (Resulting in: Fellowship).]

13. S/F: Fellowship (T'ung Jen) [Concording people / Vision sharing]: Can true fellowship be brought about within and by ??¿?? through the emergence of clear, convincing, and inspiring aims? Should these be based upon a concern that is universal and be accompanied by the strength to carry them out? To ensure the appropriate functional relationships amongst diverse elements, is an organic mode of organization required?
    - [Through fellowship values emerge, leading to acquisition of wealth. (Resulting in: Wealth).]

14. F/S: Wealth (Ta Yu) [Possession in great measure / Great possessing]: Does ??¿?? acquire a position of power in relation to the strong by acting disinterestedly with a low profile? Is wealth then appropriately administered in a graceful and controlled manner?
[To retain valuable possessions, the amount should be modest and the attitude unpretentious. (Resulting in: Unpretentiousness). ]

15. E/M Unpretentiousness (Chien) [Humility / Modesty]: Does ??¿?? prosper best by acting in an unassuming manner, whether in a position of influence or not? Does this principle also favour its efforts to establish order by reducing those extremes and inequalities which are the source of social discontent?
   * [Valued possessions and unpretentiousness together engender enthusiasm. (Resulting in: Enthusiasm). ]

16. T/E Enthusiasm (Yu) [Provision for the future]: Can ??¿?? arouse enthusiasm by acting in harmony with the needs of the time and coopting assistance for the completion of an undertaking? Does such enthusiasm release people from the grip of mundane tensions and allow them to express the hidden potentials of their society?
   * [Where enthusiasm persists, a following emerges. (Resulting in: Following). ]

17. I/T Following (Sui) [Entrainment]: In order to be capable of inducing people voluntarily to follow its lead without resistance, must ??¿?? first adapt itself to their circumstances to be able to serve them?
   * [Following others leads to undertakings and remedial action. (Resulting in: Remedial action). ]

18. M/WW Remedial action (Ku) [Corruption / Decay / Obsolescence]: Do inertia, indifference and the abuse of human freedom lead to deterioration of ??¿?? or society and call for decisive, energetic action, if regeneration is to occur?
   * [Where there is scope for remedial action, there is growth through initiative. (Resulting in: Initiative). ]

19. E/L Initiative (Lin) [Approaching / Nearing]: When conditions are appropriate for ??¿?? to initiate action on mundane affairs, should this be done with determination and perseverance, bearing in mind the need to prepare for unfavourable conditions which in their turn will later prevail?
   * [The results of initiative call for recognition. (Resulting in: Recognition). ]

20. W/E Recognition (Kuan) [Contemplation / Viewing / Careful observation]: Through the effort ??¿?? devotes to comprehending the significance underlying external events, does it acquire the power to apply that understanding to influence events? Can this power be recognized by others, who may in turn be influenced by it to take the actions of ??¿?? as a model for their own?
   * [Recognition of the relationship between results engenders decisive integrative action. (Resulting in: Decisive action). ]

21. F/T Decisive action (Shih Ho) [Bring through]: When faced with deliberate hindrance to integrative development, must ??¿?? take a just measure of decisive action against those responsible? Do such hindrances increase when norms are unclear and there is negligence in ensuring that they are respected?
   * [Rather than acting crudely, decisive integrative action calls for a graceful style. (Resulting in: Style). ]

22. M/F Style (Pi) [Grace / Adorning / Embellishment]: Does ??¿?? succeed in matters of lesser importance by gracefully respecting the sensitivities of those concerned? However, can fundamental or controversial issues be resolved by cultivating an appropriate image in this way?
   * [Excessive emphasis on style leads to deterioration (Resulting in: Deterioration). ]

23. M/E Deterioration (Po) [Striping away / Eliminating the outmoded / Splitting apart]: Under certain conditions of society inferior values may predominate. Given the superior values with which it is associated, is it wise to accept this phase of events calmly rather than vainly attempting to counteract it?
   * [Deterioration cannot continue indefinitely, thus recovery finally commences. (Resulting in: Recovery). ]

24. E/T Recovery (Fu) [Turning point / Return / Re-emergence]: Can ??¿?? recover spontaneously from adverse conditions, with the old patterns being transformed naturally into the new? Should this process of renewal should be disturbed by acting prematurely?
   * [Recovery lifts the weight of the past leading to innocent spontaneity. (Resulting in: Spontaneity). ]

25. S/T Spontaneity (Wu Wang) [Innocence / Unexpectedness / Unembroidered / Detachment]: Is ??¿?? is most successful when it acts spontaneously in response to emerging events rather than on the basis of some pre-defined programme? However, does the guidance of such instinctive certainty lead to misfortune unless it is correctly rooted in superior values?
   * [The excesses of spontaneity are contained through conservation measures. (Resulting in: Conservation). ]

26. M/S Conservation (Ta Ch'u) [Taming power of the great / Overriding concern / Accumulation of the great]: Can ??¿?? be called upon to bind together, restrain, and care for valued features of society? Is such an intimate relationship with the products of past necessities in itself valuable to the development of ??¿??.
   * [Conservation measures ensure that support is provided where necessary. (Resulting in: Support). ]

27. M/T Support (Yu) [Nourishment / Swallowing]: Should ??¿?? be attentive to the manner in which it supports both its own activities and those of others able to contribute to the development of society?
   * [Continual build-up of support leads to importance. (Resulting in: Importance). ]

28. I/W Importance (Ta Kuo) [Preponderance of the great / Great exceeding / Relationship to guiding principle]: Can circumstances may be such that the embodiment of superior values by ??¿?? experiences a period of great potential influence? Necessarily unstable, should the possible transition to other conditions be carefully explored, whatever sacrifices these may then demand?
   * [Excessive importance is undermined by persistence. (Resulting in: Persistence). ]

29. A/A Persistence (K'un) [Abyss / Gorge / Unavoidable danger]: Can ??¿?? succeed through persisting in its course of action, responding appropriately to difficulties as they emerge? In this way may the difficulties be subsequently used as a form of protection?
   * [Persistence is only effective if there are normative constraints. (Resulting in: Normative constraint). ]

30. F/F Normative constraint (Li) [Fire / Radiance / Expanding awareness]: By its nature is ??¿?? conditioned and unable to act freely? Can success be best achieved by recognizing the beneficial limitations on which it can usefully depend? Through such voluntary compliance, does ??¿?? then develop the clarity of perception required for effective action?
   * [Normative constraints operate through mutual influence. (Resulting in: Influence). ]

31. L/M Influence (Hsien) [Conjoining / Wooing]: Does success result from mutual attraction? Is this induced by the mehobdment of superior values by ??¿?? by openess to counsel as a fruitful influence on such relationships?
In order to engender appropriate order in society, should ...

[Deficiency (Sun)] [Diminishing / Decrease / Loss]: Can ?? be characterized by a self-renewing movement acting alternately on itself and on society? When embodying superior values, does ?? then ensure a flexibility in response to the environment which is grounded on an inner directive that governs all its actions?

[Endurance cannot continue indefinitely, therefore withdrawal takes place. (Resulting in: Withdrawal).]

[Withdrawal cannot continue indefinitely, hence power becomes evident. (Resulting in: Power).]

[Progress cannot be restrained indefinitely, hence progressive expansion occurs. (Resulting in: Progress).]

[Decline eventually necessitates a withdrawal into a community context. (Resulting in: Community).]

[When the community context proves inadequate, misunderstandings and opposition arise. (Resulting in: Opposition).]

[Can the preservation of the individuality of ?? embodying superior values only be achieved through creative opposition to those of inferior values? Is it on this basis that order is engendered? Faced with opposition and misunderstandings should ?? concentrate on minor initiatives?]

[Through misunderstandings and opposition, difficulties and obstructions are created. (Resulting in: Obstruction).]

[When faced with difficulties and obstacles to the achievement of its intentions, does ?? embodying superior values search for errors in the assumptions underlying its initiative, thus creating the opportunity for its own further development?]

[Obstructions cannot persist indefinitely, thus eventually liberation is achieved. (Resulting in: Liberation).]

[The process of liberation necessarily results in some loss and deficiency. (Resulting in: Deficiency).]

[Can this situation may used to clarify and strengthen the inner resources on which it can draw for future undertakings?]

[If deficiency persists it eventually evokes assistance. (Resulting in: Assistance).]

[By sacrificing its own interests in favour of the development of others, can ?? temporarily create conditions in which great progress can be made? Can the development of ?? itself then be brought about by adopting the positive attributes of others and eliminating its own defects?]

[If assistance continues long enough a new resolution emerges. (Resulting in: Resolution).]

[As any struggle against opposing forces begins to bear fruit, can ?? ensure that the resolution of the conflict is based on an amicable union from a position of strength, free from compromise or any concealment of the defects ???. Should the use of force be avoided, concentrating on the redistribution of the advantages ?? accumulates?

[Resolution and the associated action lead to new encounters. (Resulting in: Encounter).]

[A multiplicity of encounters leads to congregation. (Resulting in: Congregation).]

[When circumstances promote congregation in society, is the embodiment of superior values by ?? capable of focusing this process such as to ensure that it is itself well integrated? Should ?? also be prepared to counteract uncontrolled consequences?]

[Congregation creates an environment permitting advancement. (Resulting in: Advancement).]

[Continual advancement eventually leads to adversity and exhaustion. (Resulting in: Adversity).]

[Under adverse circumstances, should ?? accept restraint, whilst remaining true to its principles in anticipation of future opportunities? Might such restraint be due to oppression or to the exhaustion of its own resources?]

[Extremes of adversity necessitate a concentration on basic needs. (Resulting in: Basic need).]

[In order to engender appropriate order in society, should ?? ensure that this fulfils the basic needs of humanity, rather than those defined by convention? In doing so, is care required and should excesses be avoided?]

Influence can only be effective if it endures. (Resulting in: Endurance).]
49. L/F: Revolution (Ko) [Uncovering / Moulding]: Can ??e?? having the confidence of others be obliged to respond to emerging crisis conditions by promoting social transformation in order to meet the needs of the underprivileged?
   * [The most transformative revolution is that available through the cultural heritage. (Resulting in: Cultural heritage).]

50. F/W: Cultural heritage (Ting) [Cauldron / Vessel]: Is society nourished by its cultural heritage, as a vehicle through which human values are consecrated? Embodying this heritage can ??e?? succeed by ensuring an appropriate relationship between its existence and its sense of destiny?
   * [The protection of the cultural heritage necessitates crisis preparedness. (Resulting in: Crisis preparedness).]

51. T/F: Crisis preparedness (Chen) [Thunderbolts / Inspiring shock / Creative disturbance / Arousal / Shake up]: In order to fulfill a leadership role, should ??e?? be capable of accepting any external shock and recognizing the nature of the response required by it?
   * [Crises cannot continue to emerge if inaction is cultivated. (Resulting in: Inaction).]

52. M/M: Inaction (Ken) [Mountain / Confronting obstacles / Keeping still / Acknowledging limits / Boundness]: Is the effectiveness of action initiated by ??e?? largely dependent on the equanimity with which it is able to assess what is required? Should ??e?? be able to pause before action is required?
   * [Inaction cannot continue indefinitely, thus at some stage development commences. (Resulting in: Development).]

53. W/M: Development (Chien) [Infiltration / Gradual achievement / Gradual progress]: In order to engender lasting development, should ??e?? act slowly over an extended period of time, both to establish cooperative relationships and to increase its own influence so that its initiatives carry weight?
   * [Development permits the establishment of elective affinities. (Resulting in: Elective affinity).]

54. T/L: Elective affinity (Kuei Mei) [Marrying maiden / Converting maidenhood / Acceptance of imposition]: As a complement to its formal relationships, can ??e?? beneficiate engage in integrative initiatives, based on spontaneously emergent sympathetic relations with others, provided that these are conducted with reserve and mutual respect?
   * [The establishment of elective affinities creates an environment favourable to general prosperity. (Resulting in: Prosperity).]

55. T/F: Prosperity (Feng) [Abundance / Fullness / Profusion]: Because of the probability of subsequent decline, is it only ??e?? that can act optimistically without regret to sustain effectively a time of general prosperity? In so doing, should careful attention be paid by ??e?? to the enforcement of agreed rules?
   * [When prosperity declines from its own excesses, estrangement and marginality result from the destruction of relationships. (Resulting in: Marginality).]

56. F/M: Marginality (Lu) [Wandering / Sojourning]: When ??e?? has no established position or relationships in society, can it best succeed by engaging in short-term activities with those of superior values such that it is not drawn into conflict situations?
   * [Marginality cannot be absorbed or controlled by the environment and thus gives rise to penetrating clarity of perception. (Resulting in: Penetrating clarity).]

57. W/W: Penetrating clarity (Sun) [Gentle / Subtle penetration / Groundedness / Wind of change]: Can ??e?? of limited resources best achieve lasting success by acting gradually and persistently towards a clearly defined goal in association with others in a position of power? Does its influence then result from penetrating clarity of judgement that empowers those with ulterior motives?
   * [Use of penetrating clarity leads to a sense of vitality. (Resulting in: Vitality).]

58. L/L: Vitality (Tui) [Openness / Interaction / Lake]: Can ??e?? best ensure the injection of vitality into its undertakings by engaging in stimulating interaction with others so as to provide a multi-faceted optimistic basis for its initiatives?
   * [Vitality in action leads to the dissolution of barriers. (Resulting in: Barrier dissolution).]

59. W/A: Barrier dissolution (Huan) [Flooding / Dispersal / Clearing away]: Can ??e?? best dissolve divisive barriers preventing collaboration by promoting awareness of underlying unity and solidarity in a manner which engages emotions engendered by superior values?
   * [The elimination of barriers cannot continue indefinitely, thus the need for limitation emerges. (Resulting in: Limitation).]

60. A/L: Limitation (Chieh) [Confused relations / Clarifying connections / Articulation]: In order that its freedom of action may acquire significance, should ??e?? operate under constraints that distinguish its activities from those of others? However, should limits be set upon limitation of this kind to prevent such discrimination from becoming unbearable to ??e?? itself or to others?
   * [Through limitation, dependence on essential quality is assured. (Resulting in: Essential quality).]

61. W/L: Essential quality (Chung Fu) [Inner truth / Authenticity]: Can ??e?? succeed by influencing the most intractable, if it is able to identify with their condition, sincerely affirming the importance of essential qualities that it shares with them? May these take the form of fundamental principles?
   * [Limitation and dependence on essential quality enable actions to be undertaken conscientiously. (Resulting in: Conscientiousness).]

62. T/M: Conscientiousness (Hsiao Kuo) [Preponderance of the small / Attention to detail]: Faced with a challenge for which it is not fully competent, can ??e?? embodying superior values best succeed by acting with extreme prudence and attention to detail, especially in support of those not in a position of influence?
   * [Conscientiousness ensures the accomplishment of initiatives. (Resulting in: Accomplishment).]

63. A/F: Accomplishment (Chi Chi) [Undertaking completion]: Once the transition from the old to the new order has been accomplished with the exception of details, should ??e?? take considerable care to ensure that the harmony with which events evolve during their final phases does not encourage negligence that enables the seeds of an inferior order to take root once again?
   * [Accomplishment cannot exhaust the potential for further transformation. (Resulting in: Transformation threshold).]

64. F/A: Transformation threshold (Wei Chi) [Anticipating completion / Preparing for change]: When all has been prepared for transition to a new order that can transform a fragmented condition of society, should ??e?? act with deliberation and caution to determine how the available resources can best be applied to achieve the desired effect?
Further transformation calls for creativity. (*Resulting in: Creativity.* )

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