

"The I Ching, Information Theory,  
and Epistemic Models"

Two events are responsible for my organizing this material. The first was during a visit of Stohely Carmichael to the San Francisco Bay Area, where I observed a Black Philosopher throwing some coins and looking up some numbers in the back of a book. The second was a visit with Alan Watts on the ferry from Vallejo beach in Sausalito.

During the first event I went to hear a talk by the Black Philosopher who was a member of the Unitarian Black Caucus. He said that perhaps the only way to solve the social problems in America is by use of the philosophy of the I Ching. The philosopher took off for the next meeting with Stohely Carmichael, so couldn't question him further. However I headed to a book and bought a copy of the Legge translation of the I Ching.

Studying the I Ching by myself did not lead to any enlightenment. Another thing bothered me -- the Black Philosopher had said "you white Anglo-Saxon Protestants have no 'culture' -- we Blacks have maintained our culture\*, even though our social organization and institutions were destroyed by slavery."

\* Webster 7th New Collegiate Dict. culture: enlightenment and excellence of taste acquired by intellectual and aesthetic training.

I began to realize that it would require some planning to learn the significance of the remarks of the Block Philosopher.

I remembered that a friend of mine was arranging a meeting with Alan Watts. Perhaps Alan Watts with his knowledge of Eastern philosophy can suggest some start cuts to understand the I Ching.

I went to the meeting with Alan Watts. On hearing his description of the main differences in outlook between Western and Eastern philosophy, I began to think about the mathematics used in Information Theory. I told Alan Watts that engineers using Information Theory have two kinds of models of communication channels -- discrete channels, and continuous channels. Now the discrete channel approach is closer to Alan Watts "fish net coordinate system approach" by which he describes Western Philosophy. The continuous channel model is closer to Alan Watts "gooey system" by which he describes Eastern Philosophy. After discussing these concepts with Alan Watts, I realized that there is a potential coupling of Western and Eastern Philosophy through the mathematical theory of communication (or Information Theory).