

Alessandra Calanchi / Gastone Castellani /
Gabriella Morisco / Giorgio Turchetti (eds.)

The Case and the Canon

Anomalies, discontinuities, metaphors between science
and literature

With 38 figures

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Foreword

When you follow two separate chains of thought,
Watson, you will find some intersections
which should approximate to the truth.
(Sherlock Holmes in *The Disappearance of Lady Frances Carfax*)

This book is the result of intense work carried out by the Scientific Committee that organized the Conference held in Urbino and Senigallia, in Italy, from the 15th to the 28th of June, 2010. The Scientific Committee comprised various different competences in several subjects, and had, as its primary aim, that of promoting a discussion and reflexion on a complex and fascinating subject such as the interaction between the case and the canon, as has emerged in the course of centuries both in the scientific and the humanistic fields. The institutions involved in the project were not just the University of Urbino, but also two inter-department centres: for the University of Bologna, the “Centre for Bio-complexity Luigi Galvani” and the “Research Centre for Complex Systems” of the University of Senigallia. The connecting link between the Humanistic Sciences and the Hard Sciences was Sherlock Holmes, whose investigative method has been for several years the object of study by the The Research Group on Sherlock Holmes of Urbino called “Il segno dei Quattro” (The Sign of the Four), which also cooperates with the Italian Association “Uno Studio in Holmes” in organizing seminars and conferences.

In presenting this volume I would like to thank the Scientific Committee Gabriella Morisco, Giorgio Turchetti, Alessandra Calanchi and Gastone Casella that has worked so passionately and so hard during several meetings not only to organize the Conference but also to edit such a dense and complex book.

Candio Franceschi and I had the pleasure to participate into one of those preliminary brainstorming sessions and we realized from the very beginning that the discussion on this topic would be eventually very fruitful due to the different competences and backgrounds of the members of the European project “Interfacing Sciences, Literature and Humanities” - Acume 2, whose main aim has been to establish a dialogue between scientists and humanists.

This book is in part the result of the work of subproject number 2 on “Cultural Representation of Science and Technology” and it is not by chance that among the contributors we had Brian Hurwitz and Giorgio Turchetti who were two out of the four co-ordinators of subproject 2.

The title chosen for the book is certainly very revealing and evocative: *The Case & the Canon: Anomalies, Discontinuities, Metaphors between Science and Literature*.

The two parts into which the book is divided are focused on the two main keywords *Case* and *Canon*. The etymology of these two words is in itself “complex”: the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* proposes eight different meanings for *Case* and seven different meanings for *Canon*:

CASE

1. an event , an occurrence
2. chance, hazard, hap
3. an instance
4. the actual state of matters
5. physical condition
6. in law: a cause or suit
7. in medicine: the condition of disease in a patient and an instance of disease
8. in grammar it is the translation of the word Greek *ptosis*, in Latin *casus*.

CANON

1. a rule , law or decree of the Church
2. a general rule or axiom of any subject , a standard of judgment
3. in mathematics a general rule , formula, table
4. the list of books of the Bible accepted by the Christian Church as genuine and inspired
5. the portion of the Mass included between the Preface and the *Pater*
6. in music a species of composition
7. a Prestation , Pension or Customary payment upon some religious Account.

As the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* has pointed out, “case” and “canon” are words with various and complex meanings. The various essays in the volume show that they are also keywords at the basis of different disciplines which have acquired different connotations according to the various historical moments.

Michel Foucault, in his influential study on the history of the Clinic (*Naissance de la clinique : une archéologie du regard médical*, 1963), underlines the constant and persistent dialectic between “case” and “canon”: on one hand the medical practice making a huge effort to classify and simplify, on the other the incessant process of revision and re-classification of the canon according to the emergence of new “clinical cases”.

As we can see from the contents of the book, different disciplines are involved:

from physics to medicine and neurology, from forensic pathology to psychoanalysis and also literature, they all help to highlight the dialectics between the two terms. And we must not forget that Historians of Science have developed quite sophisticated tools in order to reconstruct laboratory life. Such reconstructions reveal tensions between “case” and “canon”.

The essays touch different themes: “clinical case”, “canonical structures and singularity in Physics and Mathematics”. The theme of insanity linked with the stereotype of the romantic poet as a figure of enticing irrationality and as deviant, just to mention few of the interesting topics.

As already suggested the character of Sherlock Holmes is the connecting link between the humanistic sciences and the scientist; in fact, some of the essays analyse the analogies and differences between how the “detective” and the “scientist” proceed in analysing reality. Some essays are focused on the wide use of scientific terms, techniques, and procedures in sensational and detective fiction, for example: the investigative paradigm of the “internal evidence of things” already present in Eighteenth century criminology and literature.

Sherlock Holmes himself is a detective and an amateur chemist carrying out experiments in his sitting room, together with his trustful companion John Watson, who is, in fact, a doctor. Two characters who are using their “abductive process” which is different from deductive process. Some scientists also try to propose a parallel between modern research on relativistic astrophysics, and on a theory for the evolution of complex systems founded on “scientific” paradigms, and detective stories based on a paradigm of clues.

As co-ordinator of the Acume2 Project, I am very glad that the profitable dialogue between scientists and humanists on such a central topic as “the case and the canon” will enrich our series of books on the “Interfacing of Sciences and Humanities”.

Fabio Petrella

The case and the canon in Chinese and Jewish numerological traditions: analogies between the *Yi Jing* and the *Sepher Yetzirah*

Two great ancient numerological traditions, which have survived throughout millennia by oral and written transmission of their knowledge, are bound to Chinese and Jewish cultures. In particular, fundamental information on them can be drawn from two texts: the Canon of Changes (*Yi Jing*) and the Book of Creation (*Sepher Yetzirah*).

A comparative study of these two texts shows interesting analogies in the structural and ideological approach of Chinese and Jewish traditions. Furthermore, the categories of Case and Canon, which are the main themes of this book, can be applied to both of them following the same pattern.

Also according to influential authors in sinology and history of religion¹, some common aspects of the two traditions can be clearly found.

We can summarize them into the following points:

1. Both cosmological and cosmogonical concepts can be drawn from the content of the two texts.
2. The origin of the cosmos is explained by a numerological structure based on an archetypical attribution to numbers ('transcendental function').
3. The numerological structure consists of different classificatory rows.
4. Each row is composed of a code-number which has an analogical correspondence with a natural element, a spatial direction, a season, an ethical quality, a colour, a planet, a main organ of the body.
5. One of the aspects in this classification is the establishing of a homomorphism between microcosm and macrocosm.
6. The meaning of the transcendental numbers, which marks each classificatory row, is connected with its phonetic origin.
7. The phonetic origin implies that a different 'sound', with an 'energetic value' (*qi* in Chinese, *ruach* in Jewish), can be attributed to each code-number.

¹ See Evgueni Tortchinov, accessed online 30.05.09
<http://www.kheper.net/topics/Kabbalah/numerology-SeferYezirah-Chinese.htm>

8. According to the above points, every cosmogonic and cosmological process can be considered linguistic as well as mathematical by its own nature.

To explain how the systems of the two traditions are similar, one of the best examples is the magic square 3x3 from 1 to 9.²

In the Kabalistic tradition this square (figure 1) has a correspondence to the planet Saturn (Swaney in *the History of Magic Squares*);³ also the Chinese magic square Lo Shu (figures 2, 3), which arises from the same spatial disposition of the first 9 numbers according to the so-called "King Wen's Sequence",⁴ attributes number 5 to the planet Saturn.

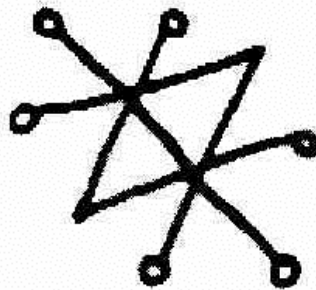


Figure 1. The magic square of Saturn

These numerical frames can be spatially oriented,⁵ so that analogical assignments can run from a particular situation, with its specific coordinates in time and space, to a universal pattern and vice versa.

So both Jewish and Chinese systems work as bridges between macrocosm and microcosm, mirroring the interdependence between incidents and the subjective (psychic) conditions of the observer.

This peculiar interdependence is the key factor to show the connection between the law of causality (scientific method, i. e. the Canon) and the synchronicity principle, i. e. the Case.⁶

As these systems are based on archetypical contents, some cases can be added to their rows according to the law of analogy.

2 See William Symes Andrews, *Magic squares and cubes* (New York: Dover pub. Inc, 1960), pp.122 – 125.

3 See Mark Swaney, accessed online 30.05.09

4	9	2
3	5	7
8	1	6

Figure 2. The Chinese magic square: Lo Shu

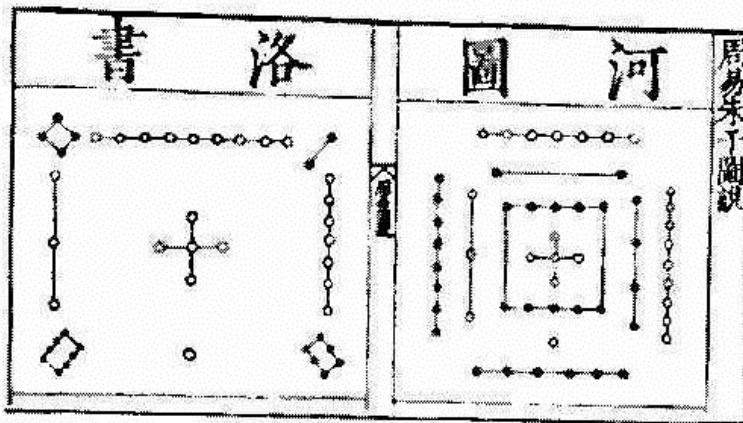


Figure 3. "The Scroll of Lou" and the "Map of Ho" (according to Ts'ai Yuang-ting), in *Magic Squares and Cubes* p.122.

The first example we choose is about Jewish numerology applied to the Tree of Life (Book of Creation, *Sepher Yetzirah*).

Figure 4 shows the table of the traditional correspondences (i. e. the Canon) between the planetary system and the first 10 code-numbers, i. e. *Sephirot*⁷ (see figures 4 and 5).

http://www.ismaili.net/mirrors/Ikhwan_08/magic_squares.html

4 Marcel Granet, "Libro II: le idee direttrici, I numeri", *Il pensiero cinese* (Milano: Adelphi, 1995), p. 138.

5 Granet, p. 120.

6 See Carl Gustav Jung, "Prefaction to the English translation of I King", *I King (Il libro dei mutamenti)*, (Roma: Astrolabio, 1950).

7 Aryeh Kaplan, *Sepher Yetzirah* (Boston: Red Wheel/Weiser Books, 1997), pp. 23-24. See also http://www.psyche.com/psyche/cube/cube_planets.html; accessed online 31.12.16

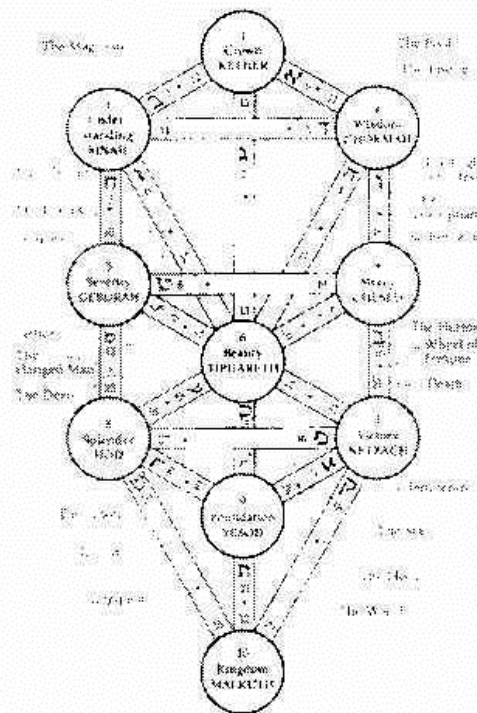


Figure 4. The 10 Sephirot (in http://www.psyche.com/psyche/cube/cube_planets.html)

VI English of Col. VI	III English of Col. III	I Key Code
Nothing	Nothing	0
Sphere of the Primum Mobile	Crown	1
Sphere of the Zodiac or Fixed Stars	Wisdom	2
Sphere of Saturn	Understanding	3
Sphere of Jupiter	Mercy	4
Sphere of Mars	Strength	5
Sphere of Sol	Beauty	6
Sphere of Venus	Victory	7
Sphere of Mercury	Splendor	8
Sphere of Luna	Foundation	9
Sphere of the Elements	Kingdom	10

Figure 5. Traditional correspondence between planets and Sephiroth (in *A Guide to Qabalistic Astrology* p.11)

Figure 6 is a revised pattern of correspondences after the discovery of the trans-Saturnian planets (i.e. the Case), where analogical meanings are carefully considered in order to fit the newcomers into the kabalistic frame.

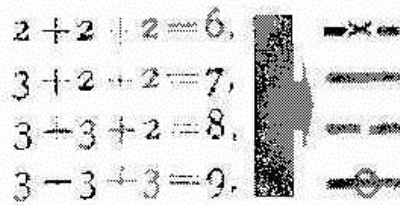
THE RECONSTITUTION OF THE QABALISTIC PLANETARY CORRESPONDENCES

KEY	SEPHIROTH	SPHERE OF
1	THE CROWN	PLUTO
2	WISDOM	URANUS
3	UNDERSTANDING	NEPTUNE
4	MERCY	JUPITER
5	SEVENTH EXTENSIVE	SATURN
6	BEAUTY	THE SUN
7	VICTORY	VENUS
8	GLORIOUS	MERCURY
9	THE FOUNDATION	MARS
10	THE KINGDOM	THE MOON

©Herbert Silberstein, The Case, Astrology, p. 14

Figure 6. Revised pattern of correspondence between planets and Sephiroth (in *A Guide to Qabalistic Astrology* p.14)

The second example in figure 7 is about the application of Chinese numerology to the system of Yi Jing reading.



Possible transformations of full lines (—) and broken lines (---)



Transformation of $☷$ into $☷$ according to the law of transformation

Figure 7. Chinese numerology to the system of Yi Jing

It is not our purpose here to explain the complete theory about the construction of the 64 exagrams; suffice it to show how each *divination* is constituted by two exagrams, one to detect a present situation, the other to indicate the 'future', that is a potential change.

In this system the Case is represented by the use of a seeming causality depending on a cast of coins or flowers (principle of synchronicity) which gives

us the first set of information, included in exagram n°1. The Canon is the application of the Law of Changing based on a numerological formula which leads us to the second set of information, provided by exagram n°2.

So, both exagrams are needed to obtain a complete message and solve our *problem* in the best possible way: firstly we deal with the analysis of the 'particular' or 'clue', secondly we get indications to be able to fit it into a universal frame.

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Fabio Petrella graduated in Agricultural Sciences in Turin and specialized in Soil Science. Since 1989 he has been working in an Applied Research Centre for Environmental Studies and is the supervisor of many projects, also at international level, with a broad curriculum of publications. Since 1982 he has been studying astronomy and astrology at the Italian Centre of Astrology (CIDA). In 1994 he started to be a student and collaborator of Dr. Roberto Marrocchesi on Fengshui. Since 2000 he has been a Fengshui teacher at the cultural centre for Eastern Studies "Istituto Italo-Cinese – Centro Oriente", where a range of Fengshui courses are organized, from the basic to the advanced and specialized level. He has published some results of his researches about the relations between astronomy, astrology, and Fengshui in the journal "Linguaggio Astrale". He has developed his spiritual interests by practising Yoga, Tai Chi Chuan and Aikido. He has also widened his knowledge of the energetic interactions between

the Heaven and the Earth fields through dowsing. A personal method based on a synthesis of western and eastern knowledge is proposed through conferences, seminars and consulting activities.