

# The Text



## 1. *Heaven*

**Heaven creates, develops, brings about fruition and consummation.**

### EXPLANATION

*Heaven* is sound, in the sense of being strong and indomitable. The lines making up the body of the hexagram are all odd; this represents pure yang, so it is called *heaven*. This hexagram represents the advance of yang, whereby the science of building life acts with strength and uses the path of firmness.

In strength, nothing is stronger than heaven; heaven as the Tao is a flow of unitary energy, circulating continuously, never ceasing. There is nothing it does not cover, nothing that can harm it. This is the ultimate of soundness and strength.

Therefore, producing things in spring is the creativity of strength. Creation means the beginning, the first arising of positive energy. When positive energy is born, all things sprout. Such is the strength of creativity.

Developing things in summer is the growth of strength. Development is extension, the expansion of positive energy. As positive energy expands, all things develop and flourish. Such is the strength of development.

Maturing things in autumn is the fruition of strength. Fruition is goodness, the proper benefit of positive energy. When positive energy achieves its proper benefit, all things come to fruition. Such is the strength of fruition.

Storing things in winter is the consummation of strength. Consummation is quiescence, the resting of positive energy. When positive energy rests quietly, all things return to their root. Such is the strength of consummation.

Creation, development, fruition, consummation, the successive movements of the four seasons, all are carried out by one strength; the one is the body, the four are the function. The body is that whereby the function is carried out, the function is that whereby the body is completed.

Body and function are as one; therefore the Tao of heaven acts with strength unceasing. As for human beings, they first take form sustained by the energy of heaven, so they have the quality of strength of heaven inher-

ent in them, and hence have this creativity, development, fruition, and consummation, the functions of strength.

The quality of strength in people is original innate knowledge, the sane primal energy. This is called true yang, or the truly unified vitality, or the truly unified energy. Confucianism speaks of singleness of mind, Taoism speaks of embracing the one, Buddhism speaks of returning to the one—all of them simply teach people to cultivate this strong, sound, sane energy.

This energy is rooted in the primordial, concealed in the temporal. It is not more in sages, not less in ordinary people. At the time of birth, it is neither defiled nor pure, neither born nor extinct, neither material nor void. It is tranquil and unstirring, yet sensitive and effective. In the midst of myriad things, it is not restricted or constrained by myriad things. Fundamentally it creates, develops, and brings about fruition and consummation spontaneously, all this taking place in unminding action, not needing force. It comes spontaneously from nature, not forceful yet strong, strong yet not forceful.

Strength having no perceptible form or trace is referred to as the celestial human. Once it mixes with acquired temporal conditioning, temperament appears and is seduced by objects. The essential intimacy of heaven and humanity then becomes estranged by habit; people abandon the real and give recognition to the artificial, so innate knowledge is obscured.

At this point, creation is not creative, development is not developmental, fruition is not fruitful, and consummation is not consummate; the quality of strength is already lacking, so the functions of strength are not what they are anymore. The spirit is dim, the energy is polluted, essence is disturbed, life is shaken; though the body moves, positive energy dissipates, and death is inevitable. This is why the sages have the science of building life, to restore the primordial in the midst of the temporal, whereby it is possible to sustain the original qualities of the strength of *heaven*, never to decay.

The method of cultivation and practice is none other than this function of creation, development, fruition, and consummation. When people can see through everything, look deeply into themselves, and turn around to set their minds on essence and life, then in the midst of trance there will be a point of living potential that will subtly emerge—this is the creation of strength. If people can cultivate and nurture this singlemindedly, putting it into actual practice, persevering indefatigably, acting so as to achieve their aim, this is the development of strength. If people can cultivate their vital spirit and powerfully go forward, so that strong energy is stabilized, objects do not obstruct them, and life and death are as one—this is the fruition of strength. If people can investigate things and attain knowledge, distinguish what is so and what is not, what is wrong and what is right, staying in what is appropriate and not deviating from it, this is the consummation of strength.

Creation is whereby that strength is born; development is whereby that strength is expanded; fruition is whereby that strength is fulfilled;

consummation is whereby that strength is consolidated. Creation, development, fruition, and consummation are functions of one energy. Starting from effort, you end up in spontaneity, integrating completely with natural principle: Then this is the original face of innate knowledge, whereby you can share in the function of heaven, and share in the eternity of heaven.

However, in this science there are medicinal substances, there is a firing process, there is a course of work, there is intensification and relaxation, there is stopping at sufficiency; you can advance into its marvels only if you practice it according to its laws, and develop it with the appropriate timing. If you deviate in the slightest, you will fail altogether. If one of the four aspects—creation, development, fruition, or consummation—is lacking, then the quality of strength will not be complete, and life will not be your own. So it is necessary to know this firing process of advancing yang.

- ***First yang: Hidden Dragon: Do not use it.***

**EXPLANATION**

In the beginning of strength, when the quality of strength is activated, it is like a hidden dragon. This is the time to nurture the sound energy; one should not yet rely or presume on this strength, so the text says "do not use it."

- ***2 yang: Seeing the dragon in the field: It is beneficial to see a great person.***

**EXPLANATION**

When strength gains balance, and is not one-sided or partial, firmness and flexibility match each other. This is like seeing the dragon in the field; the living energy is always there, natural goodness is not obscured, the spiritual embryo takes on form. A great person is one who does not lose the innocent mind of an infant, and is therefore "beneficial to see."

- ***3 yang: A superior person works diligently all day, is careful at night. Danger, but no error.***

**EXPLANATION**

The abundantly flowing energy is full to repletion, firm and strong yet correctly oriented; by day one works diligently, by night one examines one's faults. Working by day, careful by night, strong practice does not cease; one can therefore be without error even though there is danger.

- ***4 yang: Sometimes leaping, or in the abyss: no error.***

**EXPLANATION**

The quality of strength has developed, the spiritual embryo is complete, awaiting the time to molt and transmute. This is like a dragon which may

leap up or remain in the abyss. One carefully examines the climate and takes precautions against danger so that one can be free from error.

- ***S yang:* The flying dragon is in the sky: It is beneficial to see a great person.**

#### EXPLANATION

Firm strength properly balanced, yin and yang merge and transmute: one has a body outside the body, and is physically and mentally sublimated. Uniting with reality in the Tao, one does not only perfect oneself, but others as well. This is like a flying dragon in the sky, appearing and disappearing unfathomably, aiding people whenever there is the opportunity. What is called a great person here is one who rectifies herself or himself and also rectifies others, and so is "beneficial to see."

- ***Top yang:* A proud dragon has regrets.**

#### EXPLANATION

Promoting strength excessively, being only strong and not flexible, knowing how to go forward but not how to withdraw, is being like a dragon of drought: When the dragon gets to be proud, it cannot give life; when strength goes to excess, one will fail in one's tasks. When yang culminates, it must shift to yin. The celestial jewel gained is again lost. It is a logical matter of course. This is why the text says a proud dragon, one who goes too high, has regrets.

- ***Using yang:* Having dragons appear without heads is good.**

#### EXPLANATION

In general, the way to act with strength and use firmness requires appropriate timing. Creation, development, fruition, and consummation can then be strong everywhere, and strength cannot be damaged anywhere. The sage, fearing that people would not know the way to use strength, specially wrote "in using yang, having dragons appear without heads is good." This statement is very clear. Using yang means using strength; the dragon, as the radiance of consciousness, changes unfathomably, able to ascend and able to descend, able to be large or small, able to hide or appear. When you face it, you do not see its head; when you follow it, you do not see its back. Cultivating the path of strength is like riding a dragon. Using strength while being able to accord with the time is like the transformation of dragons, disappearing when it is appropriate to disappear, appearing when it is appropriate to appear, being active when it is appropriate to be active, leaping when it is appropriate to leap, flying when it is appropriate to fly, being strong without going to excess, rising high without becoming proud, relaxing, hurrying, and resting in sufficiency, each according to the time. This is strength "without a head." When you employ this, you will always be fortunate.

However, the way of headless transformation requires real knowledge and clear insight. If you engage in guesswork without insight, even if the celestial treasure is in view you won't be able to use it. First you must see it, then use it. Then there is no function within function that has function, making effort within the effort that is effortless. Being and nonbeing do not stand, for and against do not bind; knowledge is everywhere, go where you may. The Tao is in everything; the source is encountered at every turn.

Only when you use strength and are not used by it can you develop the pure unadulterated vitality in which firm strength is properly balanced. Then your fate depends on you, not on heaven; you are a peer of heaven.

# The Commentary

## 1. *Heaven*

heaven above,  
heaven below

**The activity of heaven is powerful; superior people thereby strengthen themselves ceaselessly.**

Heaven is the celestial; its quality is power. In this image, heaven ☰ is above and below; this is the image of the unified energy of heaven, which flows ceaselessly above and below, acting powerfully. What superior people see in this is that since humans originate from the energy of heaven, they have this powerful quality of heaven. This power originally flows unceasing and uninterrupted, but because of mixture with acquired conditioning, people abandon the real and enter the artificial, strengthening what should not be strengthened, so as a result there is at times interruption of the flow of the original celestial power. Therefore superior people work on the activation of the celestial power, temporarily using the artificial to cultivate the real, restoring the primal while in the midst of the temporal, strengthening themselves ceaselessly.

Strength means unbending firmness and strength, which myriad things cannot move. If one can strengthen oneself ceaselessly, then wholesome energy is always present, and one has inner autonomy: Wealth cannot make one decadent, poverty cannot move one, authority and force cannot suppress one. One does not act without propriety, one does not abide in untruth, one does not wreak injustice. Whether in pleasant or unpleasant circumstances, this strength is everywhere, never ceasing. Such action is as it were celestial.

But there are people who are powerful in a worldly sense; there are people who are powerful yet are drawn by things to use their power externally; there are also people who can sometimes strengthen themselves, who start out diligently but end up slacking off, who follow the Path but give up along the way. Genuine work of self-strengthening is all a matter of not ceasing; if there is any slacking off, if there is any personal desire, it cannot be called strength, it cannot be called self-strengthening. Only ceaseless self-strengthening can reach total integration with the celestial design, the indestructible, permanent state.

Heaven is the order of life; life is the quality of power, which is the original, vast, true energy. Because it has neither shadow nor form, yet is lively and active, flowing ceaselessly, it is called energy. Because it is most great and most strong, filling the universe, it is called power. Because it is the master of myriad beings, the progenitor of yin and yang, the root of creation, it is called the order of life. Energy, power, life—all are one strength. The work of life-building is consummated in self-strengthening without cease. This is the science of following the pattern of heaven.