



39. Halting (Trouble)

When halted, the southwest is beneficial, not the northeast. It is profitable to see a great person; innocence is auspicious.

EXPLANATION

Halting means forward progress is difficult. As for the qualities of the hexagram, above is *water* ☵, dangerous, and below is *mountain* ☶, stopping: Stopping in the midst of danger, it is therefore called *halting*.

This hexagram represents preserving the primordial in the midst of the temporal; it follows on the previous hexagram *people in the home*. In *people in the home*, illumination is not used outwardly; it is the work of refining the self. Refining the self is only refining the acquired yin. From the time people lose the primordial and temporal conditioning takes charge, the human mind is perilous, like the two yins being outside one yang in *water* ☵; the mind of Tao is faint, like the one yang fallen between two yins in *water*. With yang fallen into yin, the mind of Tao is burdened by the human mentality and cannot manifest actively—it is all the human mind that does things; this is the extreme of danger.

But as long as there is danger, it is necessary to be able to stop in danger. If one can stop in danger, then the human mentality gradually evaporates, and the mind of Tao gradually grows; it is possible thereby to deal with danger, and to leave danger, without being injured by the negative energy of acquired conditioning.

The statement “when halted, the southwest is beneficial, not the northeast” is precisely the secret of dealing with danger and leaving danger. The “southwest” is the province of *earth* ☷, the homeland of utter emptiness and complete stillness. Utter emptiness beckons fulfillment; when stillness is complete, then action goes into motion. The primordial

energy comes from within empty nothingness; as the mind of Tao appears, the human mind naturally recedes. This is the place that gives life to the self, so it is called beneficial.

The “northeast” is the direction of *mountain* 山, where yin energy has nearly stripped yang completely away. Yin energy stripping away yang, following its desires the human mind takes charge of affairs and the mind of Tao is on the verge of disappearance. This is the place that kills the self, so it is called not beneficial.

It is beneficial to enliven the mind of Tao and withdraw the human mind; it is not beneficial to arouse the human mind and damage the mind of Tao. If you enliven the mind of Tao, then you can deal with danger; if you can withdraw the human mind, then you can get out of danger.

So the fact that it is surely “profitable to see a great person” and “innocence is auspicious” is because a “great person” is one who has not lost the mind of an infant. The mind of an infant does not discriminate or cognize, has no greed or ambition—this is the mind of Tao. When one has the mind of Tao one is a great person; without the mind of Tao one is a petty person. Getting rid of the human mentality is not possible without seeing the mind of Tao; only when seeing the mind of Tao can one get rid of the human mind. So “it is profitable to see a great person” simply means it is beneficial to see the mind of Tao.

Once one has seen the mind of Tao, false and true are distinguished; at peace, in accord, essence is stabilized and feelings forgotten. No longer seduced by the human mentality, by stillness one can control danger, and by action one can solve danger. Stillness and action are both functions of the mind of Tao. Meeting danger with rectitude, maintaining rectitude in the midst of danger, eventually one will surely get out of danger, resolve danger, and fulfill the great path, completing it auspiciously.

- **First yin:** Going results in trouble, coming in praise.

EXPLANATION

In the beginning of halting, before getting mixed up in things, when the human mentality has not yet arisen, if you go and get mixed up in things then you will arouse the human mind and there will be trouble. Coming without going, the human mentality not arising and the mind of Tao always present, there is praiseworthy virtue herein. This is being careful before halting when one is weak.

- **2 yin:** King and vassal both faithful in spite of difficulty, not for their own comfort.

EXPLANATION

This second line is in correspondence with the fifth line. The fifth line is the true yang within *water* 水, like a king; the second is the true yin within *mountain* 山, like a vassal or minister. When there is danger for true yang, then there is danger for true yin: It is like a king and vassal being faithful in spite of difficulty; when there is trouble, if they can stay in their

proper places, empty the human mind and seek the mind of Tao, not letting difficulty and hardship alter their determination; this is what is called not for personal comfort. This is being able to deal with trouble in spite of weakness.

- **3 yang:** Going leads to trouble. Come back.

EXPLANATION

When there is too much adamant hardness on the brink of danger, to go on would lead to trouble. It is lucky if firmness is correct and one can stop upon seeing danger, and come back rather than go on, sweep away the human mind and hold onto the mind of Tao, having no trouble even in difficulty. This is being firm and not getting into trouble.

- **4 yin:** Going leads to trouble; come form associations.

EXPLANATION

When weak and alone, without strength, one is basically in danger; to try to force one's way out of danger would lead to trouble. It is lucky if one can restrain oneself and seek the guidance of others, not being ashamed to ask questions, coming to form associations with people imbued with the Tao, to broaden one's knowledge and vision. Then the mind of Tao will gradually grow, the human mentality will gradually leave, and one will eventually get out of danger and have no trouble. This is being weak but borrowing strength to solve trouble.

- **5 yang:** Great trouble; a companion comes.

EXPLANATION

Yang is fallen into yin, the mind of Tao is covered by the human mind—this is called great trouble. However, if strength is balanced correctly, when one uses the human mind temporarily to cultivate the mind of Tao, once the mind of Tao comes, the human mind is transformed: Strength and flexibility combine, and the primordial energy congeals from nothingness to form the elixir. So in great trouble, one is capable of a great solution. This is strength and flexibility being one energy, with no trouble.

- **Top yin:** Going is trouble, coming is great. For good results, it is beneficial to see a great person.

EXPLANATION

At the end of trouble, just when the human mind is calm and the mind of Tao appears, if one does not understand the process and tries to forcibly control the human mind, that will on the contrary obscure the mind of Tao—to go on thus would mean trouble. If one comes back to nurture the mind of Tao, without trying to control the human mind, there is great merit in this. However, it is surely beneficial to see a great person, who is someone that has understood the Tao, attained reality, and gotten out of

danger, who thoroughly understands the remedy and process every step of the way out of danger. The end of trouble is precisely the gate of life, the door of death, the point where both fortune and misfortune are possible. It is necessary to have the verbal instruction and mental transmission of a true teacher before one can seek to live in the midst of killing, get out of trouble, resolve trouble, and not be confined by yin and yang. This is seeking a teacher's verbal instruction to solve trouble.

So the way to get out of trouble and solve it requires the instruction of a genuine teacher to break through the gate of life and the door of death; only then can the task be done. If you do not know the gate of life and the door of death, not only do you not know the mind of Tao, you do not even know the human mind. If you do not know the mind of Tao, how can you bring it to life? If you do not know the human mind, how can you get rid of it? If the mind of Tao is not brought to life and the human mind is not dismissed, only fooling around in deviated methods, you will bring on trouble where there was none. This is of no benefit to essence and life, and is in fact harmful. How can we not beware?

39. *Halting*

water above,
mountain below

There is water atop a mountain, halting. Thus do superior people examine themselves and cultivate virtue.

Halting means there is difficulty and one cannot proceed onward. Above is *water* ☵, below is *mountain* ☶; there is water atop a mountain. A mountain is high and is very earthy; add water on top of that, and earthiness is strong while the celestial is weak. This is the image of *halting*.

What superior people see in this is that when people are unable to make progress on the path of sages, it is because they are competitive and contentious, emotional and greedy, not knowing how to improve themselves and correct their errors. Therefore superior people examine themselves and cultivate virtue.

If one is incapable of self-examination, one will not have self-mastery, and will be subject to manipulation; every act, every step, will entail danger and difficulty, will involve injury to life. Only by self-examination can one abandon the false and enter the real; not being deluded by externals, with every step one's feet then tread the real ground and virtue can be cultivated.

When virtue is cultivated, one's nature is stabilized and feelings are forgotten, so that one is unshakable and unwavering as a mountain. Not halted by obstacles, one cannot be injured by difficulties and troubles.

But the work of self-examination and cultivation of virtue requires clear knowledge of the image of the hexagram. The water is above, the mountain is below; the water being above means that the danger that causes halting is external, while the mountain being below means that developmental cultivation is internal. Seeing there is danger, if one can then use that danger to cultivate character, then even though the situation be dangerous the mind is not in danger. Outwardly there is danger, but inwardly it is not dangerous; the danger lies elsewhere, while cultivation of virtue and character lies in oneself. Using virtue to ward off danger, danger dissolves; using danger to cultivate character, virtuous action grows daily more lofty. So obstacles cannot faze one—indeed, it is after being halted by obstacles that one can cultivate character and virtue. If students can recognize the reality of self-examination, there is no need to worry about halting, and no need to worry about inability to develop virtue.