



# 15. *Humility*

**Humility is developmental. The superior person has a conclusion.**

## EXPLANATION

*Humility* means possession without dwelling on it. As for the qualities of the hexagram, above is *earth* ☷☷, submissive, and below is *mountain* ☶☶, still: Firmness still within, flexibility accords without; inwardly firm while outwardly flexible, it is therefore called *humility*.

This hexagram represents preservation of yang by yin; it follows on

the previous hexagram *sameness with people*. Sameness with people means mixing in with the ordinary world inconspicuously, using strength with clarity, so that strength is not used arbitrarily. Unless one's development and maturity is quite deep and rich, one cannot do this. The work of deepening development is precisely the work of preserving yang by yin. Preserving yang by yin is that whereby openness is consummated and tranquility pure, staying in the appropriate place.

*Mountain* is where one kills the self, *earth* is where one enlivens the self. Those who have not yet died first learn to die; this is the stilling of yang. Nonbirth is eternal life; this is the submission of yin. The stilling of yang is stopping false yang and nurturing true yang; the submission of yin is using true yin to repel false yin. When false yang stops and true yang remains, this is called nurturing; when false yin retreats and true yin appears, this is called submission. When one is able to nurture and to submit, one governs oneself with strictness and responds to others with openness; the mind becomes increasingly humble, while the way becomes increasingly lofty—outwardly one is lacking, inwardly one has more than enough. Submitting to truth and according with people, one rests in the highest good and does not move. This is why the path of humility is beneficial.

However, if one can be humble in the beginning but not in the end, this is having a start but no conclusion. When stillness is not stable and submission is not appropriate, humility is false and not real, so it cannot be developmental. Only superior people who practice the Tao know where to stop, disregard what they have and appear to have nothing; they are single-minded on pure reality, they have a start and a conclusion, following the Tao in their acts, growing ever stronger the longer they go on. Therefore they attain the primordial emptiness, coming from within nothingness, congealing into the elixir.

Those who are not superior people think they have what they have not, think they are fulfilled when in fact they are empty. Self-satisfied, though they be reverent outwardly they are not respectful inwardly; diligent in the beginning, they end up lazy. They inevitably wind up stopping true yang and using false yang, obeying human desires and violating celestial principles. This is not only unfortunate, it is also not developmental. How could it be considered humility?

- **First yin:** Humble about humility, the superior person thereby crosses great rivers. This is auspicious.

#### EXPLANATION

When one's nature is flexible and receptive, and one is already naturally capable of humility, and one also abides in a humble position, not presuming to take precedence over others, this is called humility. A superior person who is humble about humility is certainly capable of humility in favorable circumstances, and is also capable of humility in adversity, using this to cross the perils of "great rivers," bringing about good effects in every case. This is the humility of having the flexibility to lower oneself.

- **2 yin:** Expressing humility is upright and good.

## EXPLANATION

When flexibility and receptivity are properly balanced, and one follows the capable because of having no ability oneself, this is called expressing humility. Being humble yet expressive, one shows one's own lack and honors the attainments of others. Emptying the mind, one can fill the belly, gaining fortune by being humble. This is the humility of flexibly following the strong.

- **3 yang:** Working with humility, the superior person has a conclusion. This bodes well.

## EXPLANATION

With one yang dwelling in the midst of a group of yins, it is possible to convert the yins by way of humility. This is called working with humility. Being humble and hardworking, one's virtue grows daily, while one's consciousness of it shrinks daily; being humble oneself, others spontaneously become humble. Only a superior person with a true heart and genuine mind can do this. This is the humility of being firm and bringing tasks to a conclusion.

- **4 yin:** Beneficial to all, extending humility.

## EXPLANATION

Being flexible yet maintaining rectitude, already capable of humility toward the worthy, also capable of humility toward the low—this is called extending humility. Extending humility to the utmost, in all situations, this is the humility of flexibility benefiting all.

- **5 yin:** Not enriching oneself, one shares with the neighbors. It is beneficial to make an invasion, which will profit all.

## EXPLANATION

Flexibility in balance, one is not only personally humble, one is also capable of inducing others to be humble. Therefore one does not enrich oneself, "one shares with the neighbors." The neighbors are people who are close. If it can influence those who are close but not those who are remote, it is not real humility. "It is beneficial to make an invasion" means to apply it to strangers and opponents; when humility reaches the point where it is not concerned with sympathy or opposition, and is extended to friend and stranger alike, then its action is beneficial wherever it goes. This is the humility of being noble and able to act with an open heart.



- **Top yin:** Trumpeting humility, it is profitable to use the army to conquer one's land.

#### EXPLANATION

Elevating oneself, concerned with oneself but not with others, this is called trumpeting humility. Humility trumpeted above, incapable of being humble oneself, how can one influence others to be humble? This is why "it is profitable to use the army to conquer one's land." "One's land" means those who are close and sympathetic to oneself. Even then, if profit is gained only after using the army to conquer them, how much the more so for those who are remote from and opposed to oneself. This is the humility of one in a high position unable to lower himself.

Humility as a path is manifold—there is being firm and strong yet humble, there is being humble through yielding and being flexible, there is yielding and being flexible through humility, there is being humble to the strong. All of these value emptying the mind and lowering oneself. If you empty the mind you can fill the belly; if you lower yourself you can rise high. Herein lies using yin to equalize yang.

Indeed, humility receives benefit, satiety brings on resentment. Though humility is a slight matter, its effect is most great. If students can genuinely practice humility, with a start and a finish, then inwardly yin and yang will be in harmony, while outwardly there will be communication between oneself and others. The conditioned temperament will change, natural reality alone will be manifest, and the life-giving energy will always be there—what worry is there that the gold elixir will not crystallize and the Tao will not be attained?

15. *Modesty*

earth above,  
mountain below

**There are mountains in the earth; modesty. Thus does the superior person decrease the abundant and add to the scarce, assessing things and dealing impartially.**

Modesty means to have endowments but not dwell on them. Above is *earth* ☷, below is *mountain* ☶; this is the existence of mountains in the earth. Originally, mountains are high and earth is low; inwardly concealing high attainments while in a state of lowliness, being outwardly empty yet inwardly fulfilled, is the image of *modesty*.

What superior people see in this is that people have an abundance of pride and a scarcity of humility; therefore they act presumptuously and are never impartial. Therefore superior people decrease the abundant pride and increase the scarce humility; when handling affairs and dealing with people, they assess the relative importance of things, determine what is appropriate according to the situation, and deal impartially with it.

Superior people capable of modesty have talent but do not presume upon it; they have virtue, but do not dwell on it. They have no conception of self, and no images of others. All pride and arrogance have vanished from them, and their minds are always equanimous. When the mind is equanimous, one is naturally also impartial in one's dealings. Inwardly equanimous, outwardly impartial, one's virtue grows daily more lofty, one's heart grows daily more humble, outwardly appearing to be lacking, inwardly having more than enough. Many are the benefits of modesty.