



4. *Darkness*

In darkness is development. It is not that I seek naive innocence; naive innocence seeks me. The first augury informs; the second and third defile. Defilement does not inform. It is beneficial to be correct.

EXPLANATION

Darkness means obscurity and unknowing. In the body of the hexagram, *mountain* ䷳ is above, with two yin advancing under one yang; *water* ䷜ is below, with one yang fallen between two yins. Both have forms of yin injuring yang; therefore it is called *darkness*. As for the qualities of the hexagram, danger is within stillness; there is danger, yet ability to stop—this includes the meaning of stopping darkness.

This hexagram represents starting the operation of yin convergence.

The hexagram follows on the previous hexagram *earth*. *Earth* means going on the path of submission and receptivity; carrying out yin convergence means returning recalcitrant yin to submission.

After the primordial yang in people culminates, conditioned yin arises; the original spirit is obscured and discriminatory awareness does things. One drops the real and recognizes the false, using intellect mistakenly, producing all sorts of cleverness; though overtly there is light, inside is really dark. This is where darkness comes from.

Once you have entered darkness, essence is disturbed and life is destabilized; in a single day you are born a thousand times and die ten thousand times, not knowing how to stop. This is most perilous.

If you know there is danger and are able to stop it, silencing the intellect, being as though ignorant and dumb, though you be without knowledge outwardly, inwardly you really have knowledge. From false darkness you return to true darkness. Thus it is that in darkness there is paradoxically a way of development.

The best development of darkness is innocence. The darkness of innocence unconsciously follows the laws of God, tranquil and unstirring, yet sensitive and effective. All actions flow from the fundamental essence. This is the dignified status of a sage, the aspect of the celestial human.

Those who travel the path of darkness must go back to the darkness of innocence; only then is it the darkness that is returning to the origin. However, this darkness of return to the origin is not a matter of seeking naive innocence oneself—it is naive innocence that seeks oneself. Not seeking innocence oneself means that it does not come about by formal effort, and is not attached to forms. Innocence seeking oneself means that it comes naturally and does not fall into voidness.

Not clinging to forms, not falling into voidness, not material, not empty, since it is not a matter of seeking the real, one does not exclude the artificial either. Ever calm yet always responsive, always responsive yet ever calm, it is not darkness yet resembles darkness; it is darkness but actually not darkness. External things cannot enter; inside, thoughts cannot arise. One does not seek reality, but reality is here.

But this path that is neither form nor void has two methods, nurturing darkness and opening darkness, which should be known. When yin and yang are mixed, and natural reality has not yet been injured, and external influences have not yet entered, darkness belongs to reality. It is like a first augury, when the yarrow sticks are not yet divided, surely giving direction at first. One should be open, calm, sincere, and serious, thereby going on the path of noncontrivance. Once yin and yang have divided, there is a lack of natural reality; external influences creep in, and darkness winds up in falsehood. It is like when the yarrow sticks are messed up after two or three auguries; without awaiting their directions one may change arrangements, thus going on the path of striving.

The path of noncontrivance nurtures the darkness of reality; the path of striving transforms the darkness of falsehood. Nurturing reality, transforming falsehood, striving and nonstriving, are to be used according to the time and situation, as appropriate. One may proceed from striving and

wind up nonstriving, or one may succeed in striving by way of nonstriving. In either case the ultimate accomplishment is to use the highest good, without evil, wholly integrated with natural principle, to go back to the origin, return to the fundamental, and revert to innocence. Those who travel the path of darkness must do so in the correct way.

- **First yin:** Opening up darkness, it is advantageous to use punishments. If restrictions are removed, it will lead to regret.

EXPLANATION

In the beginning of darkness, when the human mentality first arises, one should immediately conquer it and regulate it strictly. This is like the advantage in using punishments. If you are loose and indulgent, allowing your nature to go bad, this is like removing restrictions; as you go on you gradually get into an irremediable state of base ignorance, and nothing can save or stop you, so you will surely become conditioned by externals. This emphasizes guarding against negativity in the beginning of darkness.

- **2 yang:** Taking in darkness is good, taking a wife is good; the heir ably takes over the family affairs.

EXPLANATION

Being firm yet capable of flexibility, using yin to nurture yang, is "taking in darkness." When darkness is taken in, outside is dark while inside is light; not only is yang energy not damaged, it even grows. This is like the good fortune of taking a wife, with the heir naturally taking over the family affairs. This is the time when one can nurture positive energy in darkness.

- **3 yin:** Don't take this woman in marriage; if she sees a moneyed man, she'll lose herself. Nowhere beneficial.

EXPLANATION

When the softness of yin is not balanced or correctly oriented, you indulge in feelings and desires. So "don't take this woman in marriage." What is cautioned against is doing things on the basis of the human mentality, greedy for material goods and sensual pleasures, like a loose woman who loses herself when she sees a moneyed man. Without having won others, you have already lost yourself—there is no benefit. You should know this is darkness increasing darkness.

- **4 yin:** Stuck in darkness, there is regret.

EXPLANATION

When you are basically ignorant and foolish yourself, and also keep company with petty people, not knowing enough to approach the high

mindful and illumined so as to expand and master consciousness, you will after all be stuck in darkness and be unable to get out. You will suffer regret and worse. This is being in the dark without even knowing it is dark.

- **5 yin:** Innocence is auspicious.

EXPLANATION

In stopping, knowing when and where to stop, being incapable so following the capable, using firmness to balance flexibility, borrowing strength to compensate for weakness, though dark this is not darkness; this is the auspicious path of innocence unconsciously following the laws of God. This is darkness aware of its darkness.

- **Top yang:** Attacking darkness, what is not helpful is inimical, what is helpful prevents enmity.

EXPLANATION

Firmness at the culmination of darkness is ability to control anger and desire, and to powerfully repel external influences. This is like attacking darkness. On the path of withdrawing yin, the human mentality is not helpful, so it is inimical; it is the mind of Tao which is helpful, defending against what is inimical. If one removes the human mentality, activates the mind of Tao, negative energy recedes and positive energy becomes pure and complete. Then you again see what you were originally like. This is darkness ultimately being able to not be dark.

Looking over the six lines of *darkness*, there is a great difference between real and false. When the real is used and the false removed, nurturing the one and repelling the other, doing what is appropriate in each case, then the path of yin convergence is consummated.



4. *Darkness*

mountain above,
water below

**Under a mountain a spring is produced, in darkness.
A superior person nurtures character with fruitful
action.**

Darkness means developmental nurturance without intellectualism. Above is *mountain* ☶, below is *water* ☵; here *water* is referred to as a spring and not water, because the spring under the mountain is water. When a spring is produced under a mountain, the spring is nurtured by the mountain, being water with a basis, flowing far from a deep source, going through without hindrance. This is the image of *darkness*.

What superior people see in this is that when those who practice the Tao want to exercise virtue outwardly, first they must develop character inwardly. If one acts without development, the action will have no basis; without inner mastery, action will injure character. This is the reason for emulating a spring emerging from a mountain, acting fruitfully without obstruction, taking as a model the mountain nurturing the spring, nurturing character with caring warmth.

The yang in the center of *water* ☵ refers to what is produced by celestial unity, the original generative energy that gives birth to beings. This is what is called the celestial virtue, or power. This virtue is hidden in the temporal; since ordinary people follow temporally acquired conditioning and abandon the primordial, most do not know how to develop, nurture, cultivate, and sustain this primal virtue, so as a result they gradually dissipate it and harm their own essence and life.

Those who awaken to this set aside acquired conditioning to practice inner development and outward action, using development to perfect action, using action to test development. Cultivating both inside and outside, nurturing character is developmental, and acting on it is developmental as well. Nurturing character means no worthy quality is left undeveloped, fruitful action demands that every act be fruitful. Nurturance of character demands that it be nurtured until it is stable as a mountain—only then is development complete. Fruitful action demands that it be effective as a spring flowing day and night—only then is fruition complete.

Action fruitful, character developed, one completes one's nature and understands the meaning of life, integrated with the celestial design, unconsciously following the laws of God. This is why *darkness* is valued.