



29. Mastering Pitfalls (Double Pitfall)

In mastering pitfalls there is truthfulness; thus the mind develops. There is excellence in practice.

EXPLANATION

Pitfalls means danger, as of a precipice or pitfall; mastering pitfalls means getting through danger. As for the qualities of the hexagram, above is *water* ☵, dangerous, and below is also *water* ☵, dangerous; going from one danger to another, yet able to get through successfully in spite of danger, it is therefore called *mastering pitfalls*.

This hexagram represents the presence of white within black, restoring yang within yin; it follows on the previous hexagram *nourishment*. Nourishment means seeking fulfillment by emptiness, seeking the true yang that has fallen in a pit. In human beings, after heaven and earth interact, the one point of original yang runs to the palace of *earth* ☷; *earth* is filled in and becomes *water* ☵, and *heaven* ☰ changes into *fire* ☲. At this point yin traps the yang; the celestial root is obscured and the mind gets involved with things. Though near to reality by nature, people become estranged from it by habit—descending lower and lower by daily repetition of habit, they fall into a state of ignorant obstinacy and do not know how to stop.

However, if one practices evil one becomes evil; if one practices good one becomes good—it is simply a matter of how people habitually act. Practice of evil is a way into danger, practice of good is a way out of danger. Getting out of danger requires that one believe it is dangerous—belief rules the mind. If one can believe in the danger, then one will not be seduced by external things. Practicing good, one can then be good; as it is said, once you reform, it is the same as if you were originally thus. Therefore “in mastering pitfalls there is truthfulness; thus the mind develops.”

If there is truthfulness, then the mind develops; without truthfulness, the mind does not develop. The mind with truthfulness is the mind of Tao; when the mind of Tao becomes manifest, the human mentality does not arise—sane energy grows, aberrant energy recedes, and one can thus go in and out of yin and yang without being constrained by yin and yang.

But believing there is danger requires one to practice so as to get out of danger; believing but not practicing is like not believing. Once one can believe and can practice, without hypocrisy or deception, practicing truly, one improves daily with daily practice, rising from lowliness to loftiness, gradually learning a state of exalted illumination, developing one's nature to the fullest extent and realizing one's purpose in life, returning to the fundamental, without difficulty. Therefore the text says, “There is excellence in practice.” If one practices this one can rise; without practice one does not rise. Knowing this is only valuable when one puts it into practice.

- **First yin:** Repeating pitfalls, one goes into a hole in a pit: bad results.

EXPLANATION

If one is originally foolish and also repeats folly, one degenerates daily by daily repetition; this is called repeating pitfalls. Repetition of base habits is like being in a pit and digging a hole still deeper, entering into debasement and not knowing where to stop, not being unlucky but bringing bad results on oneself. This is being foolish and habitually repeating folly.

- **2 yang:** There is danger in a pitfall. One finds a small gain.

EXPLANATION

Dwelling in the middle of two yins, daily in the company of petty people and not knowing to approach people imbued with Tao, one will ultimately fall and become a fool, just as there is danger in a pitfall. Fortunately, if one is strong and balanced, and has not fallen far, though one may not be able to get out of danger one has inner autonomy and is not influenced by base people. But it is undesirable that one believe in the danger yet not learn how to get out of danger; there is only a small gain, and one cannot clarify the good and return to the primary, which would be a great gain. This is being strong but not knowing how to cultivate good.

- **3 yin:** Coming and going, pitfall upon pitfall, dangerous and obstructed, going into a hole: Don't act this way.

EXPLANATION

If one is insecure by nature and is also foolish and arbitrary so that one acts dangerously, resulting in danger upon danger, this is "coming and going, pitfall upon pitfall." Also, edging upward is dangerous, going ahead is dangerous, and retreating backward is dangerous; this is "dangerous and obstructed." People like this do not believe there is danger, and get into increasing danger as they repeat their habits. Long habituation results in a profound decadence, like going into a pit. Ending up in a dangerous situation, such people are enslaved by things all their lives. This is being weak and only knowing how to repeat what is bad.

- **4 yin:** One jug of wine, two vessels. Use simplicity, sincerity, and openness, and in the end there will be no fault.

EXPLANATION

On the border of strength above and weakness below, being a middling sort of person, if one practices good one can be good, and if one practices evil one becomes evil. One can be good or bad—it is like there is one jug of wine, but two vessels are used to serve it. However, this fourth line dwells with the fifth; those who have faith in good believe in goodness and defer to the wise with open minds, borrowing the lucid knowledge of others to break up their own ignorance, using simplicity, sincerity, and openness to let in light. In this way can those incapable of good become capable of good, and the faulty can become impeccable. This is being flexible and able to practice good.

- **5 yang:** The pit is not full, it has only reached level; there is no blame.

EXPLANATION

In between two negatives, positive strength is properly balanced and in command; able not to be full to overflowing, one does not see evil in common people, but also being able to be unmoved and unaffected, one is vastly different from ordinary people. This is likened to a pit not being full, only reaching level. Not self-satisfied inwardly, yet not pursuing externals either, one fills the belly yet can empty the mind. This comes from natural attainment, and therefore there is no blame. This is stability of superior wisdom, being spontaneously good without training.

- **Top yin:** Bound with rope, put in a briar patch, for three years one cannot find the way out; misfortune.

EXPLANATION

Even petty people are essentially not bad; it is just that in spite of essential goodness they do not know how to practice and develop goodness—they bind and restrict themselves and get tied up in what is not good, abandoning and ruining themselves, living in peril. This is like being bound with rope and put in a briar patch. Ultimately they will inevitably perish. It is not only for three years that they will not find a way out of danger. This is base, foolish obstinacy, never cultivating oneself and ending up bad.

So those who practice the Tao should wake up and follow true teachers, seeking a way out, in order to comprehend their essence and life. Don't ruin and abandon yourself and become useless to the world just because you may have little in the way of blessings. Everyone has a part in the study of body and mind, essence and life. The goal is near at hand; one may mount the foundation of sagehood directly. It is just a matter of people being able to believe and practice. If one can actually believe in this and practice it, one will improve with daily practice, and will eventually cultivate the state of perfect good without evil, integrated with celestial principle. What happiness do people find in not practicing good?



29. *Double Water*

water above,
water below

Water travels, double water. Thus do superior people consistently practice virtue and learn how to teach.

Double water means water reaching from here to there. Above is *water* ☵, below is *water* ☵; this is water traveling from here to there, from there to here, traveling, flowing throughout. This is the image of *double water*.

What superior people see in this is that the work of sages is two-fold, involving both self-development and development of others. Self-development is the practice of virtue; development of others is teaching. If virtuous practice is inconsistent, it is hard to enter the universal Tao; if teaching is not learned, students will not understand.

Therefore they work on virtuous practice day by day and month by month, becoming familiar with the old and aware of the new, increasing their efforts as time goes on, aiming for profound attainment of self-realization. Then when it comes to teaching, they gradually develop guidance, making clear presentations and subtle indications, leading students further and further on until they penetrate thoroughly and are free from doubt.

The practice of virtue is the study of body and mind, nature and life. It is a very refined and subtle science, in which the slightest deviation can produce an enormous loss. It can be accomplished only by constancy and consistency, thoroughly investigating its principles, fulfilling nature and arriving at the meaning of life.

Teaching is a matter of receiving from forebears and educating successors. It is very urgent and necessary. If instruction is unclear, people will be misled as to the course they should pursue. One can develop others only if one learns how to teach, which involves searching out the profound and the recondite and clarifying that which is obscure.

The work of teaching is based on the practice of virtue; teaching means teaching the practice of virtue. Only if one is consistent and constant in the practice of virtue can one learn and practice teaching. If one cannot be consistent in the practice of virtue, then teaching will be baseless and unguided. When one is consistent in the practice of virtue and afterward learns how to teach, then what is consistent and constant in oneself is what is learned by others. This is like water traveling from here to there; it is all the same water, able to flow everywhere.