



## 17. *Following*

**Following is greatly developmental: It is beneficial if correct; then there is no fault.**

### EXPLANATION

*Following* means going along. As for the qualities of the hexagram, above is *lake* ☱, joyous, and below is *thunder* ☳, active: it means self and others in accord, others rejoicing when one acts, acting to the delight of others—therefore it is called *following*.

This hexagram represents seeking feeling through essence; it follows on the previous hexagram of *humility*. Humble people make naught of what they have and reveal what they lack; thereby they use yin to make yang complete. However, this is after the return of yang; before yang has returned, true yang will not come unless there is a way to summon and absorb it. The way to summon and absorb it is the path of *following*.

In this hexagram, *thunder* ☳ and *lake* ☱ join: *Thunder*, associated with the east, represents the essence, the self; *lake*, associated with the west, represents feeling, the other. In the beginning of life, essence and feeling are one. The primordial true yang is originally in oneself, but when it mixes with acquired conditioning it is lost outside, is no longer one's own but belongs to other. If you want to get back to the origin and return to the fundamental, you have to steal it back from the other.

*Following* as a path is going along with what is desired, gradually introducing guidance. Going along with desire means the self follows the other and gets the other's favor, inducing the other to come follow the self. Other and self following each other, essence seeks feeling, feeling returns to essence, and that which had been lost is restored to oneself. This is great development by way of the path of *following*.

However, though the path of following can be greatly developmental, yet there are true and false medicinal substances, there is progression and order in the firing process, there are times for action and stillness, there are times for advance and withdrawal—a small slip produces a tremendous miss. Therefore, for the great development of the path of following, correctness is most beneficial. Correct means right—following rightly, the self sensing rightly, the other responding rightly; when self and other are both right, even artificial feeling transforms into true feeling, and even artificial essence changes into true essence. Essence loves receptivity and rectitude in feeling, feeling loves compassion and benevolence in essence; strength and flexibility one energy, essence and feeling joined, we return to pristine purity. Wholly integrated with natural principle, the golden

elixir crystallizes, tranquil and unperturbed yet sensitive and effective, sensitive and effective yet tranquil and undisturbed. Those who are faulty at the outset wind up impeccable in the end. Try to understand when following is right or wrong, good or bad.

- **First yang:** Standards change; it is good to be correct. Going outside and mixing is effective.

#### EXPLANATION

In the beginning of following, is following right or wrong? Once the standard of following is the standard, it must undergo change. It is necessary to distinguish what is appropriate and what is not—only by correct following is it possible to attain good fortune. If, once one knows what is right, one then goes out and mixes with people, using things of the world to cultivate the practices of the Tao, one will not fail to accomplish one's work. This is following with care in the beginning.

- **2 yin:** Involved with the child, one loses the adult.

#### EXPLANATION

Being weak and without knowledge, following yin that arises later, one loses the original yang; this is being "involved with a child, losing the adult." This is following that is weak and loses reality.

- **3 yin:** Involved with the adult, one loses the child. Following with an aim, one gains. It is beneficial to abide in rectitude.

#### EXPLANATION

When one's nature is weak but one's will is firm, and one can follow the yang of the other and not follow the yin in the self, this is being involved with the adult and losing the child; following with an aim will attain it. However, many weak people are not earnest in their faith in the Tao, and they easily lose focus. It is essential to abide in right and not move, growing ever stronger; only thus can one get the yang of the other and return it to the self. This is following in which one is weak yet abides in what is right.

- **4 yang:** Following has gain. Even if right, it is inauspicious. Truthfully remaining on the path, using understanding, what blame is there?

#### EXPLANATION

If one is strong and yet can follow, following strength will surely result in gain. However, strength following strength is excessive strength, and is inauspicious even if correct. Strength had better be used with flexibility and gentility, truthfully remaining on the path, understanding right and



wrong, true and false, knowing when to advance and when to retreat, not bringing on blame and being blameless oneself. This is the following of strength trusting in the Tao.

- **5 yang:** Truthfulness in good is auspicious.

EXPLANATION

Happiness is herein: concealing the bad, extolling the good, following strength, following flexibility, mastering both and using balance, every act is right, every affair is proper; following the heart's desire, one does not step over the line. This is following trusting in goodness.

- **Top yin:** Binding and tying up; the king sacrifices on west mountain.

EXPLANATION

When one is foolish and ignorant and is compulsive and whimsical, unable to first go and follow others while wanting others to follow oneself, this is like binding and tying. Forced seeking and forced joining, an excess of false ideas, is like a king sacrificing on west mountain; though the celestial treasure is in view, after all it remains in the west (other) and does not return to the east (self)—in the end it is effort in vain. This is useless and insubstantial following.

So what makes the path of following developmental is effectively a matter of correctness. In following correctly, when one wants to get one must first give; if the self can follow the other, the other will follow the self. Then true yin and true yang join: Within rapture there is form, within ecstasy there is vitality—the primordial energy comes from within nothingness, congealing into a pearl, vague at first, then becoming clear. Creativity grows, growth bears fruit; where is there any fault in the path of following that bears fruit through rectitude? As it is faultless, the great Tao can be attained.



## 17. Following

lake above,  
thunder below

**There is thunder in the lake, following. Thus do superior people go inside and rest when the sun goes down.**

Following means adapting to the time. Above is *lake* ☱, below is *thunder* ☳; so there is thunder in the lake. Thunder stands for activity, lake stands for stillness; when activity enters into stillness, creative energy temporarily rests, and repose is necessary. This is the image of *following* the time.

What superior people see in this is that the primordial true positive energy in people is covered by the acquired force of mundane conditioning, and nature is moved by feeling. This is like that which is proper to *thunder* being appropriated by *lake*; if one wants to restore it, one cannot do so save by following the Tao. Therefore they "go inside and rest when the sun goes down," retreating into darkness at the hour of darkness, temporarily using stillness to nurture creativity, not daring to act arbitrarily, refining themselves and waiting for the proper time to emerge.

Resting when it is time to rest is what is referred to by the saying "If you want to take, you must give." This is particularly critical when *thunder* goes into *lake*, when the killing force is strong and the vivifying force is weak—this is the extreme of darkness. If you impetuously set to work at this juncture, not only will the vivifying force not return, but this will stimulate the killing force to go out of control.

So just "go inside and rest when the sun goes down," first be still before you act. The active follows the passive, the passive then follows the active; taking over this mechanism is imperceptible to anyone.