



51. Thunder

Thunder is developmental. When thunder comes, there is alarm, then laughter. Thunder startles for a hundred miles, but one does not lose spoon and wine.

EXPLANATION

Thunder is movement, action, represented as thunder. In the body of the hexagram, one yang is born below two yins, symbolizing the presence of movement within stillness. Here two thunders combine: From this action you arrive at that action, from that action you produce this action—a thousand actions, myriad acts, are all this one action; therefore it is called *thunder*.

This hexagram represents acting so as to proceed on the Path, warily practicing introspection; it follows on the previous hexagram *revolution*. *Revolution* involves gaining joy through illumination, refining metal by fire, removing old impurities. Removing old impurities does not mean forgetting things, forgetting the body, extinguishing the mind, and stopping thoughts; it is necessary to remove impurities in the midst of action in order to accomplish the task. This is because the Tao is alive, in movement; it is neither material nor void. We use worldly realities to practice the reality of the Tao, and use human affairs to cultivate celestial virtues; both striving and nonstriving, comprehending essence and comprehending life, the endless work all must be done in the midst of activity. Therefore there is a path of development in *thunder*.

However, there is inner activity and outer activity. Inner activity means the movement of inward thoughts, outer activity means the activity of affairs that come up. Inner activity is in the realm of self, outer activity is in the realm of other. If inner activity is genuine, outward activity will also be genuine; if inner activity is artificial, outward activity will also be artificial. Superior people are careful about what they do not see, wary about what they do not hear; this means being careful and wary about inner activity. If there is no random activity within, there will naturally be genuine activity. The movement of genuine activity may go on all the time without causing any disturbance; using this to deal with external activity, one responds without minding. Therefore "when thunder comes, there is alarm, then laughter."

The coming of thunder means that within stillness there is suddenly movement; alarm followed by laughter means initial carefulness and subsequent ease. One moment of goodness in people's minds, and the mind of Tao appears; this is heaven. One moment of evil in the mind, and the human mentality acts; this is hell. Hell and heaven do exist in the world—they are both created in people's minds. It is the good and evil, falsehood and truth of thoughts, which distinguish them.

When you have thoughts, if you can practice introspection, gradually

eliminating bad thoughts and gradually producing good thoughts, after a long time of consistency thought after thought all return to correct orientation, so that the mind of Tao is ever-present, and the human mentality does not arise: *Filled with living energy, the real self sits peacefully in the center, tranquil and unperturbed, yet sensitive and effective. Whatever comes up, you are cheerful and calm, responding with good humor, not minding at all—even if “thunder startles for a hundred miles,” still you “don’t lose spoon and wine.”*

A spoon is for eating; wine represents fine drink. When thunder peals over a hundred miles, it is very loud, and can easily startle people. If you don’t lose your marbles when this happens, this means the vicissitudes of circumstance aren’t able to disturb your balance. Because superior people are wary of inner activity, they do not fear outward activity.

Being wary of inner activity means nurturing the energy; not fearing outward activity means not agitating the energy. If one can inwardly nurture energy and outwardly not agitate energy, acting when the time is for action, not acting when the time is for inaction, accompanying the “thunder,” going along with the time, myriad actions are all genuine activity—there is no impediment in action. Herein lies the developmental quality of *thunder*.

- **First yang:** When thunder comes, alarm; afterward, laughter. Auspicious.

EXPLANATION

In the beginning of movement and action, if one can be careful and wary about what is as yet unperceived, this is how it is that there is alarm when thunder comes, laughter afterward. First being alarmed means distinguishing right and wrong, being careful in the beginning. Laughter afterward means mental attainment comes out in action, becoming complete in the end. First wary, afterward joyful; this is most auspicious for action. This represents action in which strength and firmness are correctly applied.

- **2 yin:** Thunder comes: dangerous thoughts. Losing valuables, you climb nine hills: Don’t chase it—you’ll get it in seven days.

EXPLANATION

Mounting strength with weakness, arbitrary imagination gets too high, and one tries to do what one cannot do. This is losing basic sense and acting on dangerous thoughts, like “losing valuables” and climbing “nine hills.” It is fortunate if you maintain rectitude when you are weak, not daring to act arbitrarily, even though you may have the thoughts. This is itself basic sense; without needing to seek basic sense any more, danger can be eliminated. Therefore the text says “Don’t chase it—you’ll get it in seven days.” This represents wariness of inner movement when weak.

- **3 yin:** Frightened by thunder; wary action is free from trouble.

EXPLANATION

When there is weakness where there should be strength, fearing one's own inability one also fears that action will lead into trouble; trembling in fear inside and out, body and mind are incapable of self-mastery. However, if the will is strong in spite of weakness of constitution, one can approach people imbued with Tao and borrow their strength to overcome one's own weakness. Then one will be able to do what one couldn't do before. Therefore by wary action one can eliminate trouble. This represents being wary of one's own weakness and seeking the aid of others.

- **4 yang:** Thunder gets bogged down.

EXPLANATION

When strength is not correctly oriented, and is also in the midst of negative or worldly influence, in daily association with petty people one lacks the will to practice the Tao even if one has the strength to do so. This is action that gets bogged down and cannot progress. This represents being strong but incautious.

- **5 yin:** Actively mulling over dangerous plans. No loss; there is concern.

EXPLANATION

If one is only yielding and has no firmness, when it comes time to act one lacks the qualities to do so; when one mulls over plans, those plans do not come to fruition. What can be accomplished by fearful and perilous thoughts? It is fortunate if one's flexibility is properly balanced, so that one will not dare to act arbitrarily: Then there will be no external action that will cause loss, and there will be wary concern for the inner state; also one will not lose one's basic nature of flexibility. This represents being wary and careful about the outside world when one is weak.

- **Top yin:** Movement uneasy, gaze unsteady—an expedition will bring misfortune. The action is not in oneself but in the neighbors; there is no blame. Association involves criticism.

EXPLANATION

At the top of double *thunder*, inside and out is fear alone and no real action. Therefore one's movement is uneasy and gaze unsteady. Uneasiness and unsteadiness mean weakness and incapacity; if one ends up only fearing, one cannot get far—there will be misfortune even where there was none to begin with. However, at the culmination of external action, the

action is not in oneself but in the neighbors, so even if one was blame-worthy, one can be blameless. One becomes blameless because the fear of people is bad; because it is bad, wise people will surely lead one to goodness. Therefore "association involves criticism." This represents being weak and fearing others.

In all six lines there is a kind of fear—it may be inner fear or outer fear, it may cause misfortune or it may cause blamelessness; but none of them are the path of introspection by which good fortune is gained. Looking for fear for the inward without fear of the outward, being able to be careful about the beginning and complete the end, we find it only in the first yang line. So in practicing introspection it is important to fear for the inward and not fear the outward. Fear for the inward means being careful about one's inner state; not fearing the outward means manifesting it in action. If one is first wary, and then cultivates practice, one cannot be disturbed by external things. Thereby one can realize essence and make life complete, unaffected by ups and downs.



51. Thunder

thunder above,
thunder below

Traveling thunder reverberates. Thus superior people cautiously practice introspection.

Thunder is movement. Above and below is *thunder* ䷳; this represents the movement of the sound of thunder, traveling from here to there, from there to here. When the thunder here stops, thunder elsewhere erupts; thunder continuing upon thunder is the image of *thunder*.

What superior people see in this is that errant thoughts arise wildly, another thought arising before one thought is ended, thought after thought continuing, like the movement of traveling thunder, reverberating unceasing. So if people are unable to practice introspection, they will injure nature and reason, abandon the real and enter the false, ultimately destroying their own essential life.

Therefore superior people cautiously practice introspection, striving to cause true mindfulness to grow and errant thought to vanish, not allowing the slightest defect to remain in the heart. This is because good and evil, fortune and calamity, depend on the movement of a single thought, which makes the difference between heaven and hell. One can only sustain good thoughts and get rid of bad thoughts if one is able to be cautious before the movement of thought and introspective after the movement of thought, guarding against dangers, aware of perils, not daring to slack off at any time.

Sustaining good thoughts and getting rid of bad thoughts until all bad thought is gone and all thought is purely good, ultimately wholesome without any ill, then thought may be active all the time without one being hindered by its activity, that activity returning to the state of total integration with the celestial design.