



62. *Predominance of the Small*

Predominance of the small is developmental, beneficial if correct. It is suitable for a small affair but not for a great one. The call left by a flying bird should not rise but descend. This is very auspicious.

EXPLANATION

Predominance of the small means that yin exceeds yang. As for the qualities of the hexagram, above is *thunder* ☳, active, and below is *mountain* ☶, still: Acting with restraint, basing action on stillness, stillness is stable and action is not on a large scale. Also, in the body of the hexagram, two yangs are inside four yins: Inwardly fulfilled, outwardly empty, inwardly firm, outwardly flexible, using the small to nurture the great, it is therefore called *predominance of the small*.

This hexagram represents being fulfilled and thus acting empty; it follows on the previous hexagram *discipline*. In *discipline*, one can be joyful even in danger, inwardly being autonomous, using things of the world to practice the principles of the Tao, using social activities to restore celestial qualities; the foundation of life stable, one can enter from striving into nonstriving.

In spiritual alchemy, before primordial true yang has been restored, one should empty the mind to seek to fill the belly. Once primordial true yang has returned, one should fill the belly and also empty the mind. The achievement of emptying the mind is the means to operate the natural true fire, to burn away the mundane energy of acquired conditioning until one is freed from it. This is why *predominance of the small* is developmental.

However, though *predominance of the small* is developmental, it is only beneficial if correct; if it is not correct, it is not developmental. The correct way of predominance of the small is that action not stray from tranquility,

that action be carried out with tranquility; with movement and stillness as one, "the real person plunges into the profound depths, floating about yet keeping within the circle," neither indifferent nor obsessed, keeping a very subtle consistency.

This is suitable for a small affair, but not a great one, a small affair means nonstriving, a great affair means striving. Striving is the way to find yang, nonstriving is the way to nurture yang. Once one has filled the belly, it is appropriate that the small predominate to nurture yang. If you are capable of the great but not the small, you will not only be unable to preserve yang, yang will even be damaged.

Predominance of the small being beneficial when correct means it is beneficial in small action, not in great action, beneficial in small stillness, not in great stillness. When one acts yet is able to be still, being active in the midst of stillness, stopping in the appropriate place and acting on that, even as one acts one does not go beyond the appropriate position. This is like "the call left by a flying bird should not rise but descend." Though a bird flies up, its call goes down; this means action not straying from tranquility. Action not straying from tranquility should not rise but descend, the small predominating and nurturing the great; extracting lead and adding mercury, incubating for ten months, when the spiritual embryo is completely developed, with a thunderous cry the infant appears. When nurturance is sufficient, the auspicious outcome is great; the small predominates, but the good it does is great. Sublime and subtle indeed is the predominance of the small that is beneficially correct.

- **First yin:** A bird that flies thereby brings misfortune.

EXPLANATION

In the beginning of predominance of the small, precisely when one should rest in the appropriate place and refine oneself, if one is weak and not firm in restraint, in a hurry to soar to the heights, one is like a bird flying without resting, in suspension, without stability; desiring to get ahead, instead one falls behind, suffering misfortune. One can be sure of this. This represents the small predominating yet vainly imagining predominance of the great.

- **2 yin:** Passing the grandfather, you meet the mother; not reaching the lord, you meet the retainer. No fault.

EXPLANATION

With the constitution basically yin, if you abandon yang and respond to yin, this is like passing the grandfather and meeting the mother; yin is excessively predominant over yang. But if you are correctly oriented even though weak, do not use excessively high yin but take to low yang, that is like not reaching the lord but meeting the retainer; yin does not exceed yang. When you reach balance of yin and yang, so that firmness and flexibility are one energy, thoughts not coming out from within, outward things not penetrating, not letting any external influence at all adulterate

the contents of the crucible, you will not have the fault of losing what has been gained. This is predominance of the small not going to excess.

- **3 yang:** If you do not overcome and forestall it, indulgence will cause harm, which would be unfortunate.

EXPLANATION

When yang energy is replete, and it is time to forestall danger and foresee peril, if strength is imbalanced, knowing how to be great but not small, by not overcoming and forestalling it, indulgence will do harm; the celestial jewel that has been gained will be lost again. This is the great predominating and not knowing how to let the small predominate.

- **4 yang:** No fault. Do not dally with it too much; it is dangerous to go on. Caution is necessary. Don't persist forever.

EXPLANATION

Strong yet able to be flexible, already yin and yang have unified, the five elements have merged; now is when you should await the time to transcend being and nonbeing—you should not remain too yielding anymore. If you don't stop at sufficiency and still use the path of yielding to go ahead, this is excess of the small, and will invite the foreign energies of external influences, which is dangerous. This calls for caution. Being careful about this requires changing according to the time, not persisting in the same way forever. Stop when you should stop, rest and stop the work; act when you should act, to break the shell for spiritual transmutation. Proceeding from development to release, breaking through space, only then do you attain realization. This means predominance of the small should not be excessive.

- **5 yin:** Dense clouds not raining come from my neighborhood. The ruler shoots another in a cave.

EXPLANATION

Pure yin with no yang is like dense clouds not raining coming from one's own region. The path of cultivating reality forms an elixir of the polar energies of true yin and true yang; having only dense clouds, unable to produce rain, coming from one's own region and not reaching the region of others, self and others are separated. This is also like the ruler shooting another in a cave. The fifth line (yin) is close to the fourth (yang): A sage is in sight, but one cannot humble oneself to seek from another. Sitting quietly contemplating voidness, or forgetting things and even the body, this is wishing to complete the great work by voidness alone, shooting voidness with voidness, others void and self void, snaring others in a cave. Inside and outside one voidness, void without reality, how can you accomplish

the work? This is predominance of the small without knowing to seek the great.

- ***Top yin:*** Don't overstay here. The flying bird is gone. This is called calamity.

EXPLANATION

When one is ignorant, this is already predominance of the small—one should not stay here any more. Excess in being ignorant and acting arbitrarily, listening to blind teachers, striving for elevation by conveying the vitality up to boost the brain, or conveying the energy up into the head, or keeping the thought on the point between the brows, or keeping the attention on the top of the brain, or silently paying court to the supreme god, or gazing into a mirror to get out of the body—knowing how to go ahead but not how to withdraw, one is like a bird flying to the greatest heights unable to stop itself, eventually experiencing calamity, from which none can rescue one. This is dwelling too long on a basis of predominance of the small.

So the path of predominance of the small requires seeking yang by yin before the elixir is obtained, then temporarily using yin to nurture yang after the elixir is obtained. In any case it requires that the small be correct. It will not do for the small to be either excessive or insufficient. Only then can it be developmental and beneficial.



62. Excessive Smallness

thunder above,
mountain below

There is thunder over a mountain, excessively small. Thus superior people are excessively deferential in conduct, excessively sad in mourning, excessively frugal in consumption.

Excessive smallness means excess in being small. Above is *thunder* ☳, below is *mountain* ☶; there is thunder over a mountain. When thunder is up in the sky, its sound reaches afar, but when thunder is over a mountain, its sound is muffled. This is the image of *excessive smallness*.

What superior people see in this is that practitioners of the Tao should minimize themselves in their daily activities, and not become too grand. This is because it is permissible to go to excess in being small, but not in being grand. Therefore superior people are excessively deferential in conduct, excessively sad in mourning, and excessively frugal in consumption.

It is not right to be too deferential in conduct, but when one is deferential one does not look down on people or become arrogant, so there is no harm in being excessively deferential. It is not right to be too sad in mourning, but when one is sad there is grief in the heart and one esteems nature and life, so there is no harm in being excessively sad. It is not right to be too frugal in consumption, but when one is frugal one does not waste natural resources and is content with what one has, so there is no harm in being excessively frugal.

These three things are all examples of excessive smallness, excessive without being too extreme. This is how it is with such small matters; when it comes to the great matter of nature and life, one must know the appropriate moments to advance and withdraw, to sustain and negate, one must know the principles of filling and emptying, effacing and fostering—since even the slightest miss can result in an enormous loss, no excess is permissible.

In the image of the hexagram, there is thunder over a mountain. The

mountain is still, the thunder is in movement. Action is carried forth by means of stillness, action is based on stillness. Obviously the small may be excessive but the great may not be excessive.