



27. Lower Jaw (*Nourishment*)

In nourishment, it is good to be correct. Observe nourishment, and seek fulfillment for the mouth by yourself.

EXPLANATION

The lower jaw moves whenever the mouth eats something; from that it has the meaning of nourishing people. As for the qualities of the hexagram, above is *mountain* ☶, still, and below is *thunder* ☳, active: action does not depart from stillness, stillness nurtures action; action is not random, stillness is not vain—action and stillness unified, it is therefore called *nourishment*.

This hexagram represents choosing good and holding fast to it, becoming empty to seek fulfillment. It follows on the previous hexagram *fidelity*. *Fidelity* involves strong action; without the work of care and nurturance, action and strength cannot be appropriate, and fidelity thus errs. This is why the path of nourishment is important; nourishment means nourishing what is right and getting rid of what is not right.

What is right is beneficial to body and mind; what is not right is harmful to body and mind—therefore the path of nourishment requires correctness to be good. So if you want nourishment to be correct, first you must observe whether the way of nourishment is true or false. Observing does not mean looking with the eyes; it means distinguishing in the mind what is so and what is not so, in order to find out truth. When truth is clear, then with real knowledge and lucid perception, in action one cultivates what is right, and in stillness one nourishes what is right. When one attains what is properly nurtured in both action and stillness, one can thereby seek fulfillment by oneself.

It does not say “seek food for the mouth,” it says “seek fulfillment for the mouth.” It does not merely say “seek fulfillment for the mouth,” it says, “seek fulfillment for the mouth by yourself.” This means what is sought is what is right, and what is fulfilled is what is important. It is not a matter of rich food, it is a matter of benevolence, justice, and enlightened qualities. But the way to fill oneself with benevolence and justice and taste enlightened qualities is all in seeking by oneself, not relying on others. One day when you conquer yourself and return to true order, the whole world will revert to humanity.

If you seek fulfillment, you find fulfillment; if you seek food, you find food—it is simply a matter of what you seek for yourself. The “mouth” is something empty inside; “fulfillment” means satisfying, filling. Emptying the mind, filling the belly, emptiness and fullness correspond: When the time calls for action you act, actively furthering yang; when the time calls for stillness you remain still, quietly using yin. Cultivating the external by

action, nurturing the internal by stillness, unconstrained by action or stillness, inwardly and outwardly merging with the Tao, stillness as ever nurturing, action also nurturing, action and stillness consistently correct, ultimately one can perfectly attain the great Tao, auspiciously completing it.

Those who consider the harm of hunger and thirst to be harmful to the mind all nurture the small and lose the great. This could be called seeking food by oneself, but it could hardly be called seeking fulfillment by oneself. Once one has lost true fulfillment, how could it be called nourishment?

- **First yang:** Abandoning your spiritual tortoise, you watch my moving jaw—this is unfortunate.

EXPLANATION

Being strong but acting in error, not nourishing the inward but seeking nourishment outside, abandoning the real and accepting the false, is like abandoning your sacred tortoise and watching my moving jaw. This is nourishment that is nourishing the mouth and losing real fulfillment, not being careful in the beginning.

- **2 yin:** Perverting nourishment goes against the constant. Feeding on high ground—to go brings misfortune.

EXPLANATION

To wish to nurture virtue without having any virtue, elevating and aggrandizing oneself, presuming to have what one in fact lacks, being empty yet considering oneself replete, is perverting nourishment; it goes against the constant norm of using the strong to nurture the weak, and persists in feeding on high ground. This is the nourishment of the ignorant who act arbitrarily, not knowing how to seek truth.

- **3 yin:** Going against nourishment, even with rectitude this is inauspicious. Don't act on this for ten years; there is no benefit.

EXPLANATION

Dwelling at the extreme of action, following one's desires, concerned only with food and clothing and not with essence and life, nourishing the little body and being a petty person, is going against the nourishment of nurturing truth. Even if the food is gained rightly, it is still an inauspicious path. People like this may spend their entire lives unaware that there are qualities that should be cultivated—it is not merely ten years that this should not be acted on, there being no benefit. This is nourishment in folly and ignorance, ending up without true fulfillment.

- **4 yin:** Reverse nourishment is auspicious; the tiger watches intently, about to give chase. No fault.

EXPLANATION

Having correspondence with yang (bottom line), restraining the base by the noble, not being ashamed to ask those below, borrowing others' strength and understanding in order to break up one's own weakness and ignorance, is called reverse nourishment. However, in restraining the base by the noble, there may be the defect of pride while inquiring, the heart not being sincere. It is fortunate if one is flexible and finds what is right, like a tiger watching intently, about to give chase, eyes focused and mind truly earnest, proceeding naturally, without forcing the issue. Before taking from others, seeking from oneself, if one seeks truth one finds truth. Then one at first faulty can end up faultless. This is the nourishment of the unfulfilled seeking true fulfillment, seeking below from above.

- **5 yin:** Going against the constant. It is good to abide in rectitude. It will not do to cross great rivers.

EXPLANATION

Emptying the mind, with self-control, only knowing how to nurture the inner and not knowing how to nurture the outer, is going against the constant norm of nourishing true fulfillment. Yet even though one cannot nurture fulfillment, as one can nurture emptiness and openness and remain true to it unwaveringly, this too is a path which will bring good results. However, it will not do to cross great rivers to accomplish the work of striving for the golden elixir. This is nourishment of emptiness unfilled, maintaining quietude in solitary tranquility.

- **Top yang:** The source of nourishment; dangerous, but auspicious. It is beneficial to cross great rivers.

EXPLANATION

Firmness abiding in flexibility, resting in its proper place, action and stillness unified, one is able to nourish the inner and the outer as well, able to nourish oneself and also nourish others; great is that nourishment. This is the source of the path of nourishment, whereby it is possible to complete the beginning and complete the end. Able to nourish in adverse circumstances, one is then able to nourish in favorable circumstances, of one's own accord, without waiting for anything to be said. When nourishment reaches the point where it is unconstrained by adversity or favor, unobstructed by difficulty or ease, then energy and constitution both transmute, yin and yang merge, and one rests in the highest good, unwavering; the spiritual embryo solidifies, and the great Way is completed. This is nourishment that includes both emptiness and fullness together, that has a beginning and an end.

In each of the six lines there is that which is nourished, but there are differences of right and wrong. If we look for firmness and flexibility to match each other, freedom from constraint by either adverse or favorable circumstances, both striving and nonstriving, completion from beginning to end, it seems we can only find this in the top yang. Practitioners of the Tao should calmly observe and closely examine, seek fullness by means of emptiness, nurture what is right and return to the state of highest good where there is no evil.

27. *Jaws*

mountain above,
thunder below

There is thunder beneath the mountain. Superior people are careful about what they say, and moderate in eating and drinking.

Jaws has the meaning of taking nourishment. Above is *mountain* 山, below is *thunder* 雷; there is thunder beneath the mountain. A mountain is still, thunder is active. Using stillness to nurture activity, activity being based on stillness, is like the upper jaw being still while the lower jaw moves, stillness awaiting movement. This is the image of *jaws*, meaning nourishment.

What the superior people see in this is that the mouth is a passageway through which things may exit or enter, and it is the door of right and wrong, the root of calamity, and fortune; therefore they are careful about what they say, and they are moderate in eating and drinking.

Speech is the voice of the mind; when speech is correct the mind is correct, and when speech is incorrect the mind is incorrect. Every word should be spoken only if it is of benefit to the course of the world and to people's minds. Speech should be guarded and not uttered at random.

Food and drink are important to the body; if food and drink are appropriate they benefit the body, and if food and drink are not appropriate they harm the body. Food and drink should be taken only after consideration of the reason. One should not crave too much, and should be moderate in eating and drinking.

When one is careful of speech, then the mind has nourishment; when one is moderate in eating and drinking, then the body has nourishment. When mind and body both have their nourishment, inside and outside are free from injury; then nature and life can be cultivated. This is what is meant by the saying "When one eats at proper times, the body is healthy; when one acts at the appropriate moment, the course of affairs runs smoothly."