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## *Sun* [Diminution] (*Dui* Below *Gen* Above)

### *Judgment*

Although one suffers Diminution, if there is sincerity, he shall have fundamental good fortune, be without blame, and may practice constancy.<sup>1</sup> It would be fitting should one set out to do something here. And what should one use? Two *gui* [plain and simple vessels] may be used to make sacrifice.

### COMMENTARY ON THE JUDGMENTS

*Sun* [Diminution] is such that it means Diminution for those below and increase for those above, so the Dao of *Sun* moves upward. {*Gen* is a yang trigram, and *Dui* is a yin trigram. In all cases, it is yin that should be obedient to yang. Here yang is stopped above, and yin is happy to defer to it. "It means Diminution for those below and increase for those above," and this is what "moves upward" means.<sup>2}</sup>} "Although one suffers Diminution, if there is sincerity, he shall have fundamental good fortune, be without blame, and may practice constancy. It would be fitting should one set out to do something here." {As a Dao, *Sun* means Diminution for those below and increase for those above, Diminution for the hard and strong and increase for the soft and weak. But this Diminution for those below and increase for those above is not properly a way to make up deficiencies, and this Diminution for the hard and strong and increase for the soft and weak is not a way to further the Dao of the noble man. Garnering good fortune out of this time of Diminution can only take place if one has sincerity. For if upon encountering Diminution one has sincerity, "he shall have fundamental good fortune," "be without blame," and thus may "practice constancy [or "rectitude"]"<sup>3</sup> and "it would be fitting should one set out to do something here." Diminution for the hard and strong

and increase for the soft and weak should not happen so that the hard and the strong become extinguished, and Diminution for those below and increase for those above should not happen so that those above wax fat and powerful. If one allows the hard and strong to suffer Diminution but remains free of evil purposes and if one allows those above to have increase but avoids all obsequious ends, what blame should ever befall such a one and what is there that he could ever rectify? Although it would not permit rescue from great troubles, still if one were to set out to do something in this way, he would not find things in opposition to him.} “And what should he use?” {What (he) is a grammatical function word. “What should he use” implies the meaning “what need is there to provide rich offerings here?”} “Two *gui* may be used to make sacrifice.” {The “two *gui*” refer to plain and simple vessels. If one were to practice Diminution with sincerity, even though it is a matter of only two *gui*, they still may be used to make sacrifice.} The use of “two *gui*” is in response to the particular time involved. {This is a Dao of extreme frugality, and it cannot be made a constant rule.} This is a particular time when Diminution for the hard and strong and increase for the soft and weak takes place. {Those below do not dare exercise their hardness and strength and instead place value on directing their efforts upward. This is what “Diminution for the hard and strong and increase for the soft and weak” means. The “hard and strong” are those whose virtue is superior, so their diminishment cannot be a constant rule.} Diminution and increase or waxing and waning take place in tandem with their proper times. {The natural substance of things in each case determines the measure of the thing involved. “The short as such cannot be taken for insufficiency,” and “the long as such cannot be taken for excess,” so how could Diminution or increase enhance either state?<sup>4</sup> As neither are constant principles of the Dao, they must only “take place in tandem with their proper times.”}

#### COMMENTARY ON THE IMAGES

Below the Mountain, there is the Lake:<sup>5</sup> Diminution. {“Below the Mountain, there is the Lake”: this is the image of Diminution.} In the same way, the noble man checks his anger and smothers his desire. {No greater good comes from being able to diminish something than the good of dealing with anger and desire.<sup>6</sup>}

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## COMMENTARY ON THE APPENDED PHRASES

*Sun* [Diminution] is how virtue is cultivated.

*Sun* [Diminution] demonstrates how things can first be difficult and easy later.

*Sun* [Diminution] provides the means to keep harm at a distance.<sup>7</sup>

## PROVIDING THE SEQUENCE OF THE HEXAGRAMS

With relaxation, there is sure to be neglect. This is why *Xie* [Release, Hexagram 40] is followed by *Sun* [Diminution].

## THE HEXAGRAMS IN IRREGULAR ORDER

*Sun* [Diminution] and *Yi* [Increase, Hexagram 42] are the beginnings of prosperity and decline.

*First Yang*

Once one's own duties are finished, he should quickly set forth, for then he shall be without blame, but he should take careful measure of how much diminishment takes place. {As a Dao, *Sun* [Diminution] means Diminution for those below and increase for those above, Diminution for the hard and strong and increase for the soft and weak, and it is something that operates in response to the particular time involved. First Yang abides at the very bottom, and as this hard and strong one undergoes Diminution in providing for the soft and weak [Fourth Yin], so it would not do to dawdle here, and as it is located at the beginning of Diminution, so it would not do to maintain one's fullness. Once one's own duties are finished, he must set forth [to help Fourth Yin] and does not dare relax and linger, for only then shall he manage to "be without blame." As this one uses his hardness and strength to provide for the soft and weak, although he avoids blame, he still will not gain affection. This is why after he manages to "be without blame," he still "take[s] careful measure of how much diminishment takes place," for only then will one here obtain a convergence of wills. *Chuan* [be quick] means the same as *su* [quickly].}

*Hexagram 41: Sun***COMMENTARY ON THE IMAGES**

“Once one’s own duties are finished, he should quickly set forth,” so the one above will let his will converge. {It is in order that the one above [Fourth Yin] should bring about a convergence of wills between them that one here “quickly sets forth.”}

*Second Yang*

It is fitting that this one practice constancy, but for him to set forth would mean misfortune. {The soft and weak must not be increased completely, and the hard and strong must not be completely whittled away. The one below here [Second Yang] must not act without rectitude. First Yang has already allowed its hardness and strength to be diminished in order to accommodate the soft and weak [Fourth Yin], but Second Yang treads the middle course, so if this one also diminishes itself in order to bring increase to the soft and weak, it would bring about the Dao of Bo [Peeling, Hexagram 23].<sup>8</sup> This is why Second Yang must not “quickly set forth” and instead “finds it fitting to practice constancy.” If it were to let itself advance to the soft and weak one [Fifth Yin], it “would mean misfortune.” Thus the text says: “to set forth would mean misfortune.” That Second Yang does not undergo diminishment in order to apply itself to increasing [Fifth Yin] is because “it takes the middle path [the Mean] as the route for its will.”}

**COMMENTARY ON THE IMAGES**

Second Yang finds it fitting to practice constancy, for it takes the middle path [the Mean] as the route for its will.<sup>9</sup>

*Third Yin*

If three people travel together, one person will be lost, but when one person travels, he will find his companion. {As a Dao, Sun [Diminution] means Diminution for those below and increase for those above, so it is a Dao that “moves upward.” The “three people” refers to the three yin lines from Third Yin up.<sup>10</sup> If the three yin lines were to travel together in order to provide support for Top Yang, Top Yang would lose its companion, and among them [the three yin

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[lines] there would be no master. One might call this increase, but in fact it would be Diminution. Thus it is by Heaven and Earth resonating one with the other that things develop and reach perfect maturity; it is by male and female mating that things are formed and come to life.<sup>11</sup> If yin and yang did not form pairs, could life ever be had? This is why Third Yin by traveling alone finds his companion [Top Yang] and why two yins traveling together would be sure to excite suspicion.<sup>12}</sup>

## COMMENTARY ON THE IMAGES

Here one person should travel, for three persons would excite suspicion.

*Fourth Yin*

One here may diminish his anxiety, for if he were to act quickly, he should have cause for joy and so be without blame. {Fourth Yin manages to tread upon the territory of its proper position [it is a yin line in a yin position], and, as this soft and weak one accepts the help of one hard and strong [First Yang], it can thus diminish its anxiety.<sup>13</sup> How could Fourth Yin ever allow its anxiety to last long? Thus one here acts quickly so as to have cause for joy. One diminishes anxiety by distancing himself from his faults. It is by having cause for joy that one obtains forgiveness. This is why the text says that, if one were to act quickly, he should have cause for joy, and that, by having cause for joy, he should be without blame.<sup>14}</sup>}

## COMMENTARY ON THE IMAGES

“One here may diminish his anxiety,” for indeed there is that which can give cause for joy.

*Fifth Yin*

There are those who increase this one. Of tens of coteries of tortoises, there are none that can act in opposition,<sup>15</sup> so this means fundamental good fortune. {Fifth Yin abides in the noble position with its softness and weakness and, as such, practices the Dao of Diminishment. The great river and the sea occupy lowly positions,

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yet countless streams return to them.<sup>16</sup> Here one manages to tread on the noble domain by practicing diminishment, so “there are those who increase this one.”<sup>17</sup> Coterie [peng] means “clique, party” [dang]. The tortoise is a creature that settles doubts. A yin is not someone to take the lead, and one soft and weak is not someone to take charge on his own, but here we have one who can take up this position because of his nobility and who preserves it by practicing diminishment. Thus people utilize all their strength, and duties are fulfilled with the utmost merit. The wise ponder possibilities, the perspicacious ponder stratagems, and there are none who can act in opposition. Thus the utilization of all the talented is complete. In garnering increase in this way one obtains “tens of coteries of tortoises,” something sufficient to exhaust all the help that could be rendered by Heaven and man.<sup>18}</sup> }

## COMMENTARY ON THE IMAGES

For Fifth Yin there is fundamental good fortune, as one here has blessings from above.<sup>19</sup>

*Top Yang*

This one suffers no Diminution but enjoys increase without blame. The practice of constancy means good fortune, and it would be fitting if he were set out to do something. He acquires subordinates and ministers, and private family interests cease. {Top Yang is located at the very end of the Diminution process. Above there is no one to support, and, with the end of Diminution, there is now a return to increase [in anticipation of Hexagram 42, Yi (Increase)]. The virtue of this hard and strong one does not suffer Diminution, so that converts the process to increase, with no worry about incurring blame. One has good fortune here because of his righteousness. He is not subject to the soft and weak, so the virtue of his hardness and strength endures. This is why the text says: “This one suffers no Diminution but enjoys increase without blame. The practice of constancy means good fortune, and it would be fitting if he were to set out to do something.” Top Yang abides in the uppermost position and rides upon the soft and weak. Located at the very end of Diminution, how estimable is the virtue of this hard and strong one! As he is someone to whom others return, the text says: “He acquires subordinates and ministers.” With this acquisition of

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subordinates and ministers, the whole world becomes one, which is why the text says: "Private family interests cease."}

## COMMENTARY ON THE IMAGES

"This one suffers no Diminution but enjoys Increase without blame," so one here may carry out his will with great success.

## NOTES

1. "Be without blame, and may practice constancy" translates *wuju*, *ke-zhen*. Wang Bi may not have read these phrases this way, for in his commentary to the Commentary on the Judgments there occurs the phrase, "what blame should ever befall such a one and what is there that he could ever rectify?" Here Wang apparently glosses *zhen* (constancy) as *zheng* (rectify).

2. This and all subsequent text set off in this manner is commentary by Wang Bi.

3. See note 1 above.

4. Cf. Wang Bi's commentary to *Laozi*, section 20, p. 47: "Finches have mates, as do doves. People who live in wintry climes are sure to know one type of fur from another. That which by nature is already sufficient unto itself will only come to grief if one tries to add to it. Therefore, what is the difference between lengthening the duck's legs and cutting down the legs of the crane?" Here and in his remarks on the Commentary on the Judgments to Hexagram 41, Wang is alluding to a passage in the *Zhuangzi*: "The long as such cannot be taken for excess, and the short as such cannot be taken for insufficiency. This is why, although the duck's legs are short, to lengthen them would cause it grief, and, although the crane's legs are long, to cut them down would cause it distress. Therefore, what is by nature long is not something that should be cut down, and what is by nature short is not something that should be lengthened." See *Zhuangzi*, 21/8/8.

5. The lower trigram is *Dui* (Lake, Joy), and the upper trigram is *Gen* (Mountain, Restraint).

6. Neither Wang Bi nor Kong Yingda attempts to explain the image further, but Cheng Yi has this to say about it:

The vapors [*qi*] [of the Lake] well upward and moisten what is above [the Mountain]. The depth of the one is decreased in order that the height of the other be increased, so both contribute to the image of Diminution of what is below. When the noble man observes the image of Diminution, he uses it as a guide to bring Diminution to himself. In the course of cultivating himself, the things that he ought to diminish are, of course, anger and desire.

See *Zhouyi zhezhong*, 12: 23b.

*Hexagram 42: Yi*

19. Kong Yingda says that “above” refers to Heaven. See *Zhouyi zhengyi*, 4: 29a. This is hinted at in Wang Bi’s commentary to Fifth Yin: “all the help that could be rendered by Heaven and man.” Cheng Yi expands upon Wang’s remark: “It is because one here can take over completely the views of the mass of common folk and stay in perfect accord with the principles of Heaven and Earth that blessings descend upon him from Heaven above.” See *Zhouyi zhezhong*, 12: 25a.