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(jié) Limitation

Limitation. Success. But bitter limitations cannot persist.

- Nine in the first place: Not going beyond your courtyard door: no blame.
- Nine in the second place: Not going beyond your courtyard gate: misfortune.
- Six in the third place: If you are without limits, then you will sigh and worry, but without regrets.
- Six in the fourth place: Contented restraint. Success.
- Nine in the fifth place: Sweet restraint. Good fortune. If you proceed, you will be rewarded.
- Six at the top: Bitter limits. Persistence brings misfortune. Regrets disappear.

Image

Above the lake, water: the image of restraint. You should set limits and act within moral guidelines.

A lake holds water within a limited space. Similarly, good people set limits to their actions, restraining themselves in order to be kind to others. The other image used here is that of the joints in bamboo, the literal meaning of the character naming this hexagram. We usually think of limits as negative, but if we think about lakes and bamboo joints, we realize that they are in fact sources of strength, essential parts of a healthy life.

Bamboo is a rapidly growing grass with hollow stems. Each hollow tube terminates in a woody membrane that blocks the hollow. These solid portions have two functions: they give strength to the plant and they are the loci for branching and other growth. Without the joints, bamboo would collapse easily, and never grow into sturdy tree-tall plants. Humans have learned to set terms to many parts of their lives. In a school or university, courses may last for a semester. This limited span makes it possible to complete one task before shifting direction or recommitting to further progress in the same field. Learning to complete short-term goals, such as a one-semester course, helps develop the skills that enable us to be more knowledgeable in selecting long-term goals and in finding methods of overcoming the obstacles that will arise within that commitment. While destructive restraints should be avoided or discarded, the appropriate limits are actually supportive. If we restrain our spending, we save enough to give ourselves more freedom of choice in the future. For this reason, Confucius taught his students to find delight in a very simple lifestyle, so that they could have the freedom to choose occupations that were

not harmful to others. It is not that he loved poverty, but that he wanted his students to avoid the “golden handcuffs” or unlimited greed, and to limit economic compulsions in their lives.

Shaughnessy, 78–79, 297.

Lynn, 518–522.

Wilhelm/Baynes, 231–234.