



12. *Obstruction*

Obstruction's denial of humanity does not make the superior person's rectitude beneficial. The great goes and the small comes.

EXPLANATION

Obstruction means blockage. As for the qualities of the hexagram, inside is *earth* ☷, submissive, and outside is *heaven* ☰, strong: Submitting to one's desires, outwardly acting adamant, negative energy is in charge, while positive energy retreats; because strength and receptivity are separated, it is called *obstruction*.

This hexagram represents yin and yang not joining; it follows on the previous hexagram *treading*. *Treading* is promoting strength with harmony and joyfulness, causing yin and yang to join, so strength and receptivity are united. In general, when yin and yang do not combine, true yin changes into false yin and true yang changes into false yang; the primordial is lost and false energy enters; false energy enters and true energy recedes. That is why "obstruction's denial of humanity does not make the superior person's rectitude beneficial." "Denial of humanity" is false energy, the "superior person" is true energy. When the primordial has not been injured and true yang is within, the single mass of true energy is the "superior person." When the primordial has been lost, and the true yang is scattered externally, whatever the body has is false energy.

To follow that conditioned yin, indulging in emotions and giving free rein to desires, without any limit, is "denying humanity." That denying humanity is not beneficial to the superior person means that false energy is not beneficial to true energy. At this time the practitioner of the Tao should get rid of intellectualism and gather the energy and spirit within to preserve true yang. Particularly at this disadvantageous time, just when the great goes and the small comes, when negative energy does things, if

one does not know how to forestall danger, one will increasingly produce obstruction, and it will be very disadvantageous.

- **First yin:** Pulling out the roots of a reed takes others with it. It is good and developmental to be correct.

EXPLANATION

When one yin subtly arises, the root of obstruction is already established, and the potential of obstruction will surely emerge; this is likened to pulling out a reed by the roots, taking others with it. At this point, when yin energy has just arisen and yang energy is not yet injured, if one can immediately effect balance, it is possible to change a state of obstruction into one of tranquility. In general, when one forestalls obstruction by being correct, obstruction does not occur, and one attains a good state in reason and growth in action. This is forestalling yin before obstruction takes place.

- **2 yin:** Embracing servility, the petty person is lucky; for the great person, obstruction is developmental.

EXPLANATION

When the yin energy gradually advances, the killing energy about to burst forth, and one is externally a superior person but inwardly a petty person, this is called embracing servility. Though the yin of embracing servility has not yet reached the point where it harms yang, it already has momentum toward harming yang. For a petty person, false energy acting obediently is good luck, while for a superior person, the inability of true energy to get through is obstruction. For practitioners of the Tao, if they are virtuous in danger and avoid difficulty, not being deluded by yin energy, they can find a way of development even in obstruction. This is guarding against yin just as obstruction takes place.

- **3 yin:** Hiding shame.

EXPLANATION

When yin energy clusters, and one follows one's desires, taking the false for the real and considering that good strategy, really concealing shame and unaware of one's disgrace, this is following yin and not knowing there is obstruction.

- **4 yang:** If there is an order, there is no fault. The companions attain felicity.

EXPLANATION

At the point where yin culminates and mixes with yang, within obstruction is concealed tranquility, and the living potential also appears. The original order is again in force. The quality of strength in people is the

innate mind that is the natural order, the celestial command. This mind is inherently complete in everyone, no more in sages and no less in ordinary people. But when it is constrained by temperament and covered by human desires, one takes pain for pleasure and will not turn back. If people will turn back, natural goodness will appear; one good can dissolve a hundred evils, and one can immediately climb up on the shore of the Tao. Then those with fault can arrive at impeccability. Even if people are ordinary and mundane, if they know and practice this path, calamity turns into fortune, and companions attain felicity. This is ability to not obstruct yang when it arises.

- **5 yang:** Ending obstruction, great people are fortunate, but tie themselves to a tree trunk lest they go to ruin.

EXPLANATION

When firm strength is properly balanced and one preserves the mind of Tao and gets rid of the human mentality, even without seeking the end of obstruction it ends of itself. That ending is because of ability to forestall obstruction in a time of tranquility. Abiding inside three yangs is the time of tranquility proper. Tying oneself to the trunk of a tree for fear of going to ruin means forestalling ruination before it happens, to think of unrest in times of tranquility. Then how can negative energy penetrate? This is warding off yin in the time of tranquility.

- **Top yang:** Overturning obstruction: First there is obstruction, afterward joy.

EXPLANATION

At the end of obstruction, negative energy should recede and positive energy should advance; this is precisely the time to overthrow obstruction. Practitioners of Tao take advantage of this opportunity so that the celestial and the human are activated together, suppressing yin and supporting yang; first there is obstruction, afterward there is joy. It is as easy as turning over the palm of the hand. This is advancing yang at the end of obstruction.

So that which cannot bring about tranquility without obstruction is the repetitious path of conditioning; that which can effect tranquility in the midst of obstruction is the achievement of the primordial in reversing the flow of events. But it is necessary to recognize the medicinal substances and know the firing process clearly, advancing and withdrawing according to the time without rushing ahead or lagging behind.



12. Obstruction

heaven above,
earth below

When heaven and earth do not commune, there is obstruction. The superior person therefore is parsimonious with power and avoids trouble, not susceptible to elevation by emolument.

Obstruction is blockage. Above is *heaven* ☰, below is *earth* ☷; the energy of earth rises up from below, the energy of heaven descends from above—the energies of heaven and earth, the celestial and the mundane, do not mix, and myriad things are stifled. This is the image of *obstruction*.

What superior people see in this is that heaven and earth, yin and yang, do not mix, myriad things are inert, and when the celestial and the earthly in the human being do not commune, natural reality is damaged. Therefore they are reserved and reclusive at the appropriate times, sparing with their powers and qualities, thus avoiding trouble, not susceptible to elevation by emolument.

To be parsimonious with power means to banish intellectualism, to conceal one's illumination and nurture it in secret, borrowing the temporal to preserve the primordial, not letting any external influences adulterate natural reality. This is because once people get mixed up in acquired conditioning, the false comes and the real departs; the mind is seduced by things, the nature is deranged and life is destabilized. No obstruction is more of a hindrance than this, no trouble is more of a problem than this. If one does not know to escape quickly, as soon as there is any ambition for honor or material gain, or any emotional feeling about objects of sense, this will cause even more obstruction—how can one then avoid injurious trouble? Not susceptible to being elevated to a high post in the world, one is not moved by glory or emolument, much less by petty gains.

The words "parsimonious with power" are very pregnant, involving many things and most detailed effort. Whatever talent or knowledge one has, one should hide it and be stolid as a monumental rampart, forgetting others and self, having power yet not being conscious of it. If one is conscious of one's power, that is not being parsimonious. Precisely because one is not conscious of one's power one cannot be elevated by emolument.

If emolument cannot elevate one, the trouble is no longer there, and the obstruction disappears of itself. Thus though the earthly and the celestial do not commune at first, they will inevitably join in the end; so the effect of avoiding trouble by being parsimonious with power is not small.