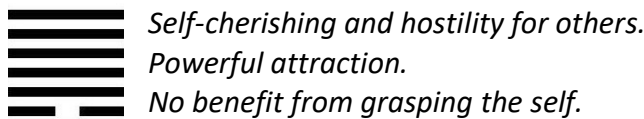


Hexagram 44 – Meeting What Harms



Structure: One weak line enters from the bottom, but the five top lines restrain it.

Time: The hexagram marks the fifth month in the Chinese calendar, June-July. At summer solstice, the force of darkness gradually ascends, which ultimately overcomes the force of light.

This hexagram describes the dangerous situation when feelings of hostility and arrogance for others first arise, eclipsing our awareness of the spirit. It gives instruction on how to meet and dissolve these harmful feelings.

Preliminaries for the Practice: The foundations for this practice depend upon the following:

- We know we belong to the sacred Earth Interbeing and wholeness with the spirit. We have awe for the spirit of life and all of creation, a mystery unknowable yet known.
- We know the suffering caused by the belief in exceptionalism and the willingness to harm, and if we hold or have held this belief and willingness, we regret the harms we have inflicted upon the Earth Interbeing.
- We turn away from what harms the sacred Earth Interbeing and move toward caring for it.

The Practice

Recognize the danger and respond immediately: Feelings themselves do not cause harm. Yet when linked with the willingness to harm for self-benefit, hostile and arrogant feelings endanger Earth Interbeing and our spiritual path. These feelings motivate us to harm whom those we blame for getting in our way, separating us from the ways of the spirit.

At first, a disharmonious interaction may seem insignificant, perhaps even normal, but the wise understand its danger. If arrogant anger takes root, it absorbs our life energies, and its true harm comes out. We need to clearly identify feelings of hostile arrogance quickly before we rashly act upon our willingness to harm others for self-benefit.

We experience anger within difficult interactions or situations that exceed our capacities to respond in a calm and gentle manner. Hostility depends upon a trigger for it to arise. For instance, we feel others do not meet our expectations or treat us disrespectfully. When things do not go as wanted, we may have the urgent need to control the situation. Hierarchical societies generate arrogance, hostility, and violent behavior as those higher in status use force to impose their will upon those lower in status. Lower status people absorb the anger directed against them, feeling resentment, but often they release that anger upon someone of lower status than they or against themselves in self-destructive behavior.

Retreat: As soon as we recognize our anger we need to step back from the interaction which triggered the hostility, retreating physically if possible. We can only do this if we still remain aware of our path and before our hostility overwhelms us. We must have enough awareness to recognize

our need to heal ourselves, which requires a strong resolve and an unswerving inner purpose to stay with the spiritual path.

We do not control arising experience. However, we have complete responsibility for how we respond to the experience we do not control. Feeling angry warns us that we have reached the limits of our capacities to respond well.

Drop the blame: When we blame others for our feelings of hostility, our willingness to harm strengthens. In most of our blame-stories, we play the part of the innocent victim, and whoever stops us from having our way gets the role of the abuser. Ultimately, if we do not cut through this narrative, we release our hostility, causing harm to others and the Earth, or we direct our hostility against ourselves, causing harm to our own being.

Our activated arrogance and hostility grow stronger with the focused energy we give them. The wise do not investigate the stories about their anger and resentment because they know that will only entangle them deeper into the stories, erode their resolve to stay with the path and increase the danger. We simply drop the blame-story we pinned to our difficult feelings.

Make a choice: As soon as we discern within ourselves a willingness to harm others for self-benefit, we must recover our harmony by reconnecting with the Earth Interbeing and spirit. Healing begins when we renew our resolve to care for the Earth Interbeing. Turning away from our exceptionalism toward humility leads us to knowing our equality with all. Wisdom lets us view the differences in respectful ways. Love has the strength to live in harmony with others, with the Earth Interbeing.

Until it becomes a way of life for us, we have the difficult path of having to constantly choose between living in ways that harm others and the Earth or a way of living that recovers the harmony and balance of Creation. Whenever we see ourselves feeling and acting arrogantly, we can step back and see the dangers of living that way. We can choose a different path and a different way of responding to whatever situation has elicited our arrogant reaction.

We seal our resolve to live the ways that care for the Earth Interbeing by resting within the spirit. The love we experience within this resting heals us from wanting to harm. We stay with this love and allow it to deepen into our being.

The depth of our willingness to choose to care for others depends upon how close we feel to the sacred Earth Interbeing. We live in a culture that does everything it can imagine to separate us from the sacred and Earth Interbeing. It will take time for an abstract understanding of Earth Interbeing to ripen into a deep love, into a feeling of family.

So, we begin to practice living the harmonious ways of kindness, respect, wisdom, humility, and courage within daily family interactions. Once we start to fulfill our responsibility to care for the Earth Interbeing, the circle of loving family continues to widen to eventually embrace Earth Interbeing, even extending to those we feel unredeemable.

Weeds always grow back and prove difficult to eliminate. Yet every time we turn away from exceptionalism toward caring for the Earth Interbeing, we make it known to ourselves that we persist in stabilizing our loving heart. Gradually our capacity to turn away from exceptionalism grows

stronger. Success in one instance grows our confidence that we can overcome our exceptionalism in other situations. Our gratitude for the practice grows.

Throughout this practice, the sage has an abiding faith in the transformative power of love. The sage keeps a glad mind as it has no doubt in the outcome of the practice. With a glad mind, we skillfully respond to negative feelings with much gentle care without becoming entangled in the feelings which we seek to transform.

When we find joy in the spiritual path, then we can practice and deepen our devotion to it. Throughout the whole process of transformation, a glad mind supports both presence and confidence in the path.

Line 1: When arrogance and anger arise unchecked, they strengthen and degrade our resolve to benefit all and activate our willingness to harm. The wise check these feelings at once to avoid them strengthening.

Line 2: If we indulge emerging feelings of anger and arrogance for others, they absorb the energy of our attention and take root, bringing out their true character. The wise hold these feelings as if guarding a dangerous prisoner, yet with gentle care.

Line 3: The line does not take seriously the dangers of arrogance and anger when they arise. Once these tendencies strengthen, the line finds it hard to disentangle itself from them. At this point, only a determined resolve to preserve the spiritual path can tame these feelings in the midst of the dangers they have already caused.

Line 4: The line entangles itself in its arrogance and anger, causing others to distance themselves from it.

Line 5: The line aligns its actions with the ways of the spirit and trusts in the transforming power of love to heal its arrogance and hostility, dangerous feelings that ride upon our life energies. Healing depends upon the fundamental law of love.

Line 6: The line dismisses the spiritual path and directly struggles with these dangerous feelings on its own, becoming deeply entangled with them. Because the line did not adhere to the transformative spiritual path of love, it only has itself to blame for the harm it causes.