

Hexagram 41 – Reciprocity



Reciprocity.

Behavior accords with interbeing.

The Creative, significant.

Without fault, permitting what benefits all.

Harvesting: possessing directed going.

To what belongs availing?

Two platters permit the offering.

Ideogram: Hand and ceremonial vessel, the offering of a sacrifice.

Structure: The lake ☵ decreases its depths to increase the height of the mountain ☶.

All the harms people cause others and the Earth come from the willingness to harm for self-benefit and then ignore the suffering they cause. The selfish take more than their share and deprive life and the Earth of what they need. They justify their violence by claiming exceptionalism and exemption from Earth limits and moral boundaries. The selfish take without giving back.

The survival of the Earth Interbeing depends upon reciprocity, the giving back to the Earth Interbeing what we take from it to meet our needs. Earth Interbeing offers us many gifts and blessings that we take: food, shelter, medicines, wisdom, the kindness of others, our very lives. To recover from the imbalance of the taking, we give forward what we have to offer to further Earth Interbeing. Without this restoration of balance, Earth and all life suffer. When people base their civilization upon only taking and never restoring the balance, they threaten the survival of the gift-giver, the Earth Interbeing and, thus, themselves.

The wise daily decrease their willingness to harm others for self-benefit and conditioning to their culture's dangerous beliefs in exceptionalism and exemption from the fundamental principle of reciprocity. Daily, we reduce our taking from the Earth Interbeing and increase giving forward the blessings we have received from Earth and life, again and again until we have nothing more to increase or decrease and have balanced our taking and giving, harmonizing with the sacred whole. We use reduction and increase according to the time to fulfill our responsibilities to the Earth Interbeing.

Reciprocity preserves the wealth of the Earth Interbeing by destroying individual wealth that accumulates from taking without giving back. Thus, the wise understand reciprocity as a repayment of a debt owed rather than a sacrifice or diminishment of their being. The interconnectedness of the Earth Interbeing could have it no other way.

Within cultures that have for long ignored its obligations of reciprocity, people will resist the idea that they owe the Earth Interbeing anything. It will take time for such a culture to undo its many harms inflicted on Earth Interbeing. It will take great collective wisdom for people to understand the need to rebalance their accounts with Earth Interbeing and transform their anger into wholeness. Without their sacrificial devotion to wholeness, the Earth Interbeing will not recover its balance. If the Earth Interbeing cannot recover its balance, neither can people.

The wise free themselves of their culturally conditioned taking without giving back that disregards the well-being of others. When we can catch ourselves wanting to impose our will upon others to have our way or to take more than enough, we can pause and question our intentions. If they do not match the

values of the ways of wholeness, the wise do not follow such urges.¹ When we dissolve these dangerous urges by resting with them within a loving spiritual presence, we can then discern how to move through the situation in ways that benefit all.

Also, the wise guard against the dangers of excessive or insufficient reciprocity, which would also create an imbalance and reactivate self-cherishing and aversion. Reciprocity finds the middle way between taking and giving, yielding and strength. At first, reciprocity seems difficult as we have yet to free ourselves from our harmful ways, but then it becomes easier to rebalance our taking from the Earth Interbeing and to live within moral bounds and planetary limits.

When people disregard reciprocity to meet the expectations of others and spinelessly comply with a culture that only takes, they degrade their lives and fail to care for others and the Earth. To render true service of lasting value to another, the wise care for the Earth and all life without relinquishing their spiritual being or the ways of wholeness. Reciprocity involves a sacrifice, a loss of something we value to obtain something of greater value. We diminish our excess to allow other beings to meet their needs so that they can simply live.

Reciprocity manifests our devotion to the sacred in essential and meaningful ways. It embodies a loss and renounces increasing our wealth to the detriment of others. Giving back an equal value for what we take recovers the Earth Interbeing balance and brings us back into wholeness with it. Even in harsh situations, we can still affirm life and the Earth in small ways. The persistent effort to decrease how we harm life and the Earth finally leads to a change into its opposite: wholeness. When we recover our balance with the Earth Interbeing, flowering begins.

Line 1: If we willingly give too much of ourselves in the service of others, we will not meet our needs. If we give too little, we will not meet the needs of the other. If we take too much from those willing to give, we will do them harm. If we do not take enough, we will not meet our needs. The line remains sensitive to the balance of giving and taking.

Line 2: To render true service to another, the wise line serves without relinquishing itself or compromising the spiritual path. Those who throw themselves away to do the bidding of another diminish themselves without providing lasting service to anyone.

Line 3: Three travelers at first have the same journey, but two bond with a different path than the third, who leaves and follows its own path.

Line 4: The line diminishes its faults to heal and recovers its balance with Earth Interbeing. Moving toward wholeness brings joy.

Line 5: The line needs not fear anything because fate has ordained its spiritual blessings.

Line 6: The line obtains in great measure what it wanted. It disperses its blessings to others without diminishment of its blessings. Sages do not seek private advantage for what they accomplish but offer it as a public good and available to everyone.

¹ **Ways of Wholeness:** We interbe with all our sacred Earth Interbeing relations with love, respect, and care. We know the sacred within all our interactions and open to the loving path through problems and dangers. We live within Earth limits and moral bounds to sustain the sacred balance and harmony of the Earth Interbeing. We share and reciprocate the gifts we receive from the Earth Interbeing. We become whole beings and lovingly fulfill our own responsibilities to the wholeness of Earth Interbeing, creating opportunities for others to do the same.