

I Ching Reading
Meat Complicity and Thou
August 21, 2023

The I Ching has a deep history. Its roots lie reach down into the oracle bone divination of the Chinese Bronze Age, and its philosophical commentaries dating to the third century BCE secured its place as a central text for Chinese thought. The I Ching eventually arrived in Europe by the way of the Jesuits. The German philosopher Leibniz and psychoanalyst Carl Jung brought to it an ever-widening circle of attention and respect.

People who consult the I Ching have a complex relationship with it. Some approach the I Ching as a spiritual teacher. However, the I Ching shares more than wisdom; through its readings, it offers a conversation.

Louise for the past several years has worked on her own I Ching commentaries, a collection of hexagram essays, which she calls the *The I Ching of Interbeing*, a project, she says, remains very much a work in progress. You can access her I Ching at wayofhumanity.net

We asked the I Ching what it would like to share with you in its first *Meat, Complicity and Thou* reading. We received from the I Ching Hexagram 47 with a moving line in the 4th place, which appears below, using Louise's I Ching hexagram essay.

Hexagram 47 Keeping a Glad Mind

Oppressive situation.

Blessings.

Proving the sage.

Be trustworthy

Words untrustworthy.

Image: A tree grows in a deep ravine within a restricting space.

In the time described by this hexagram, the ruthless restrain and oppress the wise. The situation restricts the influence of the sage as its words have no effect. Such times of adversity can lead to success for sages, however, as their inner stability allows them to withstand the dangers of the time and to act in small ways that care for the sacred Earth and all life.

Self-cherishing and hostility for others confine and bind us to our willingness to harm others for self-benefit and then ignore the suffering we cause. The forces of worldly concerns¹ shape beliefs and morals. Oppressors depend on those who benefit from the harmful ways of the

¹ For the words balance, complicity, cosmos, exceptionalism, harmony, interbeing, virtue, self-righteousness, ways of the spirit, world, and worldly concerns, please visit wayofhumanity.net/glossary for a glossary which provides a brief definition of their meaning as used in this commentary.

oppressors to remain indifferent to how these ways destroy the Earth and all life. Those on the spiritual path fulfill their lives by bringing to life the ways of the spirit within the world to benefit all.

Many on a spiritual path practice in easy circumstances, but our resolve to live the ways of the spirit may waver in challenging situations. The petty and selfish easily ignore the path when things do not go their way. They complain about their difficulties and blame others. Some stumble further into the ignorance of darkness when they use force against what they want to overcome. The weak fall into despair and doubt the path.

The wise free themselves from complicity with the harmful ways of the oppressive world by rooting themselves in the spiritual path. They find release from their complicity by reshaping their beliefs to align with the ways of the spirit and by persistently choosing to act in ways that care for the sacred Earth and all life. When arising experience exceeds their capacities to respond in loving ways, sages deepen their spiritual path to discern the way forward. In this way, the wise alone can endure living within an oppressive culture without losing their creative resolve to benefit all.

Whatever comes up, sages respond to it in a friendly manner and persevere in their duty. They have no doubt in the outcome for they have prepared themselves thoroughly and act in ways to care for the Earth and all life. Even when oppressive situations encroach on their spirit, sages use the joy of following the spirit to renew themselves. When they seem to have no options, the wise rely upon their faith in the path to get through even the dark nights of the soul.

Sages differ from others in how they relate to their situation and how they find joy. Having a glad mind strengthens our resolve to balance the unbalanced, to reduce disharmony. If the situation does not exhaust our resolve to adhere to the ways of the spirit, the path continues. The wise have joy and gratitude for challenging opportunities to fulfill their purpose. True joy always comes from caring for the sacred Earth and life and following the ways of the spirit.

Line 4: The wealthy and privileged line wants to work for justice in the world, but instead of proceeding with speed and energy to address what harms the Earth and life, the line begins in a measured, hesitant way. The line finds it difficult to renounce the benefits it gains from complicity with what harms. Yet this difficulty does not endure as the line at last frees itself from what harms and lives the ways of the spirit.