

I Ching Reading 4

Meat Complicity and Thou

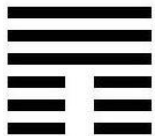
October 22, 2023

The I Ching teaches us what is important in life. It gives us insights into the fundamental issues of our lives and instructs us on how we can nourish the virtues necessary to connect with the spirit and to manifest its ways within our lives and in the world. People who consult the I Ching have a complex relationship with it. Many 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 I Ching of Interbeing*, a project, she says, remains very much a work in progress. You can access her I Ching commentary at wayofhumanity.net.

We asked the I Ching what it wanted to share in its fourth *Meat, Complicity and Thou* reading. We received from the I Ching Hexagram 12 with moving line in the 4th and 5th places. This appears below, using Louise's hexagram essay.

Hexagram 12 – Drawing Apart



To oppression belongs amoral people.

No benefit from a sage's virtue.

The worthy going, the unworthy coming.

Image: The hexagram represents a time of disintegration, marking the 7th month in the Chinese calendar (August to September). The Book of Changes holds that the union of spirit and Earth produces life. When the season for growth has ended, autumnal decline sets in, an unstoppable withdrawal of the conditions for growth.

This seasonal change illustrates the hexagram image of the Creative and Earth Interbeing moving apart, numbing all things. In such a time within the world, confusion and disorder prevail. Those lacking a spiritual path dominate others harshly.

When selfishness and hostility increase, the ways of the spirit decline. The life-destroying forces prosper and oppress all. In this disadvantaged time, the selfish and powerful increasingly produce more dangers as they willingly harm others for self-benefit without limits, creating ever greater imbalances and marginalizing the wise. The declining human devotion to the spirit makes it difficult to discern the path toward restoring harmony and balance.

Self-cherishing and hostility disrupt the flow of life and sever our communion with the sacred and Earth Interbeing. When we value wealth, power over others, materialism, and indulgence more than the spirit, we become an object among objects and subject to external influences. We suffer and cause the suffering of others. Mistrust prevails in community life. The influence of the sage dwindles within the world.

Those who benefit from domination and exploitation of others and the Earth resist and deny the sacred. When entangled with what harms, the false dominates and the real departs. Wisdom has no influence over those whose unchecked self-cherishing and willingness to seriously harm the Earth Interbeing degrades the conditions upon which all life depends.

When the destructive forces of oppression block sages from benefiting all, they do not allow themselves to be turned from their principles. If conditions prevent them from exerting their influence within the world, sages retreat. While waiting, they further develop their spiritual being and preserve the spiritual path. By not yielding to what harms, they succeed. When the times change, the path forward reemerges.

The more we investigate and understand the effects of self-cherishing and hostility upon others and the Earth, the more we recognize our complicity in what harms. We see how we struggle against the ways of the spirit and cause suffering. In the Book of Changes, only people can remedy their willingness to harm others for self-benefit: we cannot expect salvation or miracles to do it for us. Only people can stop abusing each other and the Earth and undo the harm we have inflicted. We have the challenge to free ourselves and all life from oppression. When we overcome our deluded beliefs in our exceptionalism and our denial of the sacred and the Earth Interbeing, we pull out the roots of our willingness to harm others for self-benefit and all its harms.

Within the world, the wise replace competition and victory-seeking with cooperation. When immersed within the spirit, material gain becomes a burden. The wise honor the Earth's blessings and the good works of others. Great changes emerge from changing the smallest parts.

Line 4: The time nears when the drawing apart changes. The line has the calling to bring to life the ways of the spirit, and the time favors the line's efforts. A path emerges that leads back to restoring balance and harmony within the world. All share in these blessings. When capable people aligned with the spirit act when the opportunity arises, they become whole and have joy.

Line 5: The time of drawing apart begins to yield. The wise, however, remain cautious about losses, which serves them well as dangers still exist. Such periods of transition should make us fear and tremble. To successfully overcome complicity with what harms within oneself and oppression in the world requires the greatest caution. The wise attach themselves to the spirit firmly and regain their influence in the world, which benefits all.