

What do you depend on?

A commentary on I Ching hexagram 30, "The Clinging"

We can't help clinging. We cling to people, to beliefs. Clinging is the natural tendency of things to embrace one another. Clinging displays the power of attraction. Things are held together through clinging. For example gravity is an expression of clinging. The earth clings to the sun through gravitational pull. People are attracted to one another through clinging.

But clinging also obsesses and fixates. "I cling to you and won't let you go." Thus clinging produces the pain of separation. The person that was clung to is now perceived as the source of pain and loss. Thus clinging produces aversion, produces hatred.

But clinging happens. It is Eros. It is love in action. So clinging happens... it can't be avoided. This is a given.

So what to cling to? How to express clinging?

In the commentary for Hexagram 30 (Chinese Book of Changes, Richard Wilhelm translation), we read the following:

"...The trigram Li means "to cling to something," "to be conditioned," "to depend or rest on something," and also "brightness." A dark line clings to two light lines, one above and one below – the image of an empty space between two strong lines, whereby the two strong lines are made bright... As an image, it is fire. Fire has no definite form but clings to the burning object and thus is bright."

"What is dark clings to what is light and so enhances the brightness of the latter. A luminous thing giving out light must have within itself something that perseveres; otherwise it will in time burn itself out. Everything that gives light is dependent on something to which it clings, in order that it may continue to shine."

The Judgement for the hexagram also states that "care of the cow brings good fortune." Clinging means we are docile. We devote ourselves to something. Except it's not some "thing". We devote ourselves to the Self, to the inner guide. We are docile, like the cow, allowing ourselves to be led.

"A dark line clings to two light lines, one above and one below – the image of an empty space between two strong lines, whereby the two strong lines are made bright."

What we cling to is not a thing. It is emptiness. This emptiness is also the light. We are conditioned by the mysterious emptiness at the source of all, within all, which is also fire, energy, brightness. The emptiness appears as energy, which is to say movement, motion. We allow ourselves to be informed, to be led from within by this energy. This is what we "cling" to, are "conditioned" by, and are "dependent" on.

What does it mean to be devoted in such a way? "What is dark clings to what is light and so enhances the brightness of the latter."

We bring all that is dark and negative within ourselves, and offer it to the fire. We don't suppress the negative emotions. We offer them to the light. To cling like this, to be devoted in this way is a conscious act. It is a discipline. We choose not to act out of negativity and defensiveness. Even though we feel the full force of these things in us, we choose not to be moved by such things. We choose to be guided (light) by the mystery of our depth (dark).