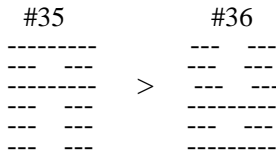


#36 Darkening of the Light

[(literally) “The Light Laid Low”]



In #35, we saw progress which relies on support from others. A lot of negativity can enter into such progress. For instance, the first line of #35 admits that advancement is accompanied by weakening: “jin4 ru2 cui1 ru2,”[‘along with advancement, something that beats a person down’] and the heart-to-heart bond is blanked out—“wang3 fu2.” Naturally, while advancement is happening, people would rather consider it as all wine and roses. But the *Zhouyi* is interested in sorting out contrasting perspectives: when we come to the counterstep of Advancement here at #36, we look at the negative underbelly of progress---the young person of bright promise is kept down by obstacles, and the light is wounded.

Xingqing: To invert the situation of Advancement means taking a grim view of the emergence of an elite. Here we will not see pollyanna-like views of progress. In other words, one recognizes here at #36 that the elite dominates at the expense of someone else. The recognition may come because of bitter personal experience, or perhaps one identifies with the downtrodden. He applies his talents among them, and keeps his flame burning under oppressive conditions.

Among the insensitive elites we can number a certain business school graduate who once cavalierly claimed that poor people don’t wish to be successful, and if they truly wanted to succeed, they would dress better and invest in bettering themselves. On the other hand, consider a man like Angus Wright, who wrote *The Death of Ramon Gonzalez*. Angus Wright spent many years of his life investigating use of toxic pesticides by agribusiness. Use of such pesticides causes chronic illness and death among migrant workers from Mexico. The system is tilted to produce abundant food for supermarket customers in North America, while migrant workers must accept exposure to pesticides in order to be employed.

Angus Wright went among the workers and questioned them about their work, but his investigations were stymied at every turn by agribusiness owners who did not share. He served as a witness for migrant workers in court cases. He may not be as financially “successful” as an agribusiness owner, but without people like him, how could we know the plight of the lowest social echelons? I am sorry to make this thuddingly obvious point here, but the inversion of #35 to #36 is about the obvious contrast in viewpoints between the privileged and the underprivileged. The sage made his concern

obvious by choosing these two hexagram names---“progress” and “wounding of the light.” Many find it convenient to ignore the inverse view, however thudding the reminders. I am reminded of a line from the Gary Snyder poem: “I am tightening the same screw again and again.” (‘Left Out in the Rain’)

Progression: First Yang of #35 reminds me of an underground figure, for instance a member of an underground literary group in China soon after the Cultural Revolution. (It reminds me of Yan Li, who wrote: “Once my poems kept cool with me in the subterranean shade.”) Such a person hurries about on his existential errands, trying to keep writers’ groups in touch outside of the official Writers’ Guild. He has the imagination to see that a culture needs stitching together every generation, and people passionate to share their ideas are needles who do the sewing. A person like this opens up channels of information against a dark, benighted backdrop. He is misunderstood, and perhaps beaten down (like the “Beats” felt in 1950s America), but his movement seeks freedom. I have noticed that people in the underground are almost always wounded. The underground poets in China wounded themselves with alcohol (and other ways), so they could fall away from the rigid language of ideology. That was their path to be creative.

Second Yin takes even riskier action than First Yang, and this exposes her to being wounded. However, such risk goes hand in hand with her strength to remedy or resist the dark forces.

Third Yang stops going head-to-head with the benighted forces: he finds somewhere he can apply his strength without being stifled. He tries to win merit by doing the grunt work---fighting an incipient threat far afield. Even the oppressors would thank him for addressing this threat, if only they bothered to assess the situation clearly. But recognition takes time, and it is important not to be too visible, for that would only incur resentment.

Fourth Yin is wounded in her most emotionally vulnerable spot (the left underbelly), because she has exposed herself and gotten close to someone who has the power to undo her.

Fifth Yin uses the theme of being wounded as camouflage. She dramatizes the brutal situation by acting insane, and somehow this allows her to master her own madness.

Top Yin has been wounded to such an extreme that she compensates too wildly against it. She flashily shows the talents that First Yang kept concealed. She shows all her talent at once, but this creates an imbalance in her character: she lashes out against the darkness that has already penetrated her. Therefore her display of brilliance is self-undermined, and she crashes Icarus-like to earth.

Centrality: Second Yin has the strength to suffer wounds yet grapple directly with the benighted forces. She can draw on the experience of First Yang, who flies under the radar through dark regions, and of Third Yang, who proves his heroism on the margins of the benighted status arena. Fifth Yin dramatizes the human damage done by the situation. Her feigned madness carries an irony that finds a balance between Fourth Yin, who absorbs suffering into herself (carries a cross) and Top Yin, who arrogantly denies the wounding until it catches up to her.