

Shades of Faith

by Denis Mair

The habit of turning a thing about and considering it from various angles is natural to the *I CHING*. We see it at the most obvious level when two hexagrams stand in contrast, as in the pair Qian and Kun. But we also see it when a concept is set forth in various hexagrams, allowing us to consider it from several angles. The word 孚 (fu2) is a many-faceted concept which is important in the *Zhouyi*. It can be translated as “sincerity,” “trust,” “faith,” “bond of understanding,” or “heart-to-heart resonance.” By looking at the contexts of 孚 in different hexagrams, we can see how sensitive the original authors were to the nuances of this concept. I believe that the authors purposefully riffled through many possible uses of 孚, to explore what faith can and does mean in life’s vicissitudes.

The word appears in the text 39 times: it is used 13 times in the Upper Canon [hexagrams #1-#30] and 26 times in the Lower Canon [#31-#64]. This weighting in the distribution of 孚 places it among many hexagrams dealing with emotional complexity and problematic human interactions (predominant in the second half). This implies that faith is called into play increasingly as we proceed along life’s path.

The word 孚 is an ideograph depicting a bird’s foot, 爪, over the word 子 (“offspring”). Thus the root meaning of 孚 relates to the brooding or hatching of eggs---i.e., an intent, nurturing focus upon another living thing. 孚 was used in other ancient books besides the *I CHING*. It was used three times in the “Greater Elegantiae” (dynastic hymns) of the *Book of Songs*, referring to confidence in the dynastic center. It was also used in the ancient chronicle called the *Zuozhuan*. In one

passage of the *Zuozhuan*, a distinction is made between 孚 and the synonymous word 信 (“trust, belief”). [See Duke Zhuang, 10th year, in the *Zuozhuan*.] This passage tells us that 孚 is not simply trusting or believing that the other person will act in a certain way. Rather, it is a heart-to-heart understanding, whereby one person knows he can rely on another. The sympathetic connection conveyed by 孚 is similar to a later, Buddhist-derived word, 感應 *gan3ying4*, meaning “resonance from heart to heart.”

I can think of several hexagram pairs which show a remarkable distinction in the use of 孚: that is, 孚 appears in one hexagram that has a Dionysian feel, but is absent from the inverse hexagram having a more conservative tone. A good example is #58 The Joyful versus #57 The Gentle (䷊ and ䷋). The word 孚 appears twice in #58 ䷊, in the central lines 2 and 5. Themes ascribed to #58 (and to the Dui trigram) are joyful fruition and giving of oneself---both of which require faith. The Dui trigram is also associated with a lady shaman---someone who expresses faith in the form of trances and incantations. By contrast, there is no 孚 in #57 ䷋; instead, we read in Line 6 about the loss of value tokens and/or weapons which were hoarded under a bed: 異于床下，喪其資斧。 (資斧 *zi1 fu3* means “funds and axe heads.”) Axe heads are an image of implied violence but were also formerly used as trade articles. Note that axe head 斧(*fu3*) is pronounced somewhat like 孚(*fu2*).

䷋ #61 Inner Sincerity (中孚) is 孚's eponymous hexagram, so all of its lines, in one way or another, describe open-heartedness in dealing with other living things. The Judgment sets forth a simple image of river dolphins. (Ou-yi dispenses with “pigs and fishes” and takes 豚魚 to mean 鯨魚 [dolphins], which has the same sound. He

writes that dolphins love to “greet the wind,” which fits with the upper trigram.) And what image would be more fitting than dolphins for this hexagram of shared understanding, given how dolphins love to swim alongside of boats that are “crossing the great water”? The fascination of dolphins for men, and of men for dolphins, belongs to our collective memory---a playful expression of biophilia across the species barrier. In Line 2, a bird hidden in the shade calls out to its child, and a man invites someone to share the best wine. In Line 3, people cry and sing after finding each other. (The Dionysian flavor comes through strongly.) The ruling 5th line, which often presents the gist or thrust of a hexagram, speaks of an understanding “like clasped hands”(有孚攣如). The extreme of this hexagram, at the top line, shows a bird that pitches its voice too high, thus incurring the risk of being misunderstood.

Contrastingly, ䷛ #62 The Small Get By (小過) is the perfect example of keeping a low profile and making sure you don't get hurt. There is no 孚 here, because this hexagram is about self-protection and avoiding grandiose gestures! The duke in Line 5 takes this keep-your-nose-to-the-ground attitude to great lengths---he goes hunting with tethered arrows for something in a burrow. At the extreme of Line 6, there is danger for birds flying overhead (飛鳥離之), because the no-nonsense attitude is turning into resentment---the very opposite of faith.

In #64 ䷛ Not-Yet-Across, the 孚 appearing twice in the culminating top line is very Dionysian--- ‘have faith in drinking wine...and have faith when departing from this [phase]’ 有孚飲酒...有孚失是. Such faith gives us reasons to dream of tomorrow, and be intoxicated by prospects of life’s eternally unfinished business. Now that we have reached the end of a cycle, we are challenged to make a new

beginning. It takes faith to “to depart from this” or “to miss what is correct” (失是) and push off into the new cycle. Such a departure is the main theme of Not-Yet-Across. Line 4 mentions the culture hero Zhen, who led his people on a Moses-like journey before the Shang dynasty was founded. The enterprise of looking for a homeland requires faith.

Contrastingly, ䷗ #63 Already Across does not contain the word 孚. It symbolizes a phase of arrival, a stopping place that calls for contentment. We are supposed to rein in our attraction for the unknown, to forgo the spirit of adventure. We are reminded in Line 3 of Gaozong, who defended the security of an already established dynasty. At line 4, which marks the tricky transition from the inner to outer trigram, we see fancy clothes are worn into tatters, which sounds a warning about the entropy that awaits any new enterprise.

In #17 ䷗ Following, 孚 motivates us to follow our inner promptings (which are suggested by the inner Zhen trigram). In Line 4, 孚 appears in a beautiful phrase: “You may capture something while following, but to persist would be unfortunate. Keep faith along the Way, and with clarity, what blame could there be?” (隨有獲，貞凶。有孚在道，以明，何咎。) Line 5, the ruling place, also uses 孚: “One has faith that things will come together well.” (孚于嘉). Evidently, it is important to have faith while following something. But the extreme outcome of Following, when it reaches the top line, becomes hard to understand: a person leads the way to make offering to the Lord of Heaven, on a mountaintop, yet he is bound and confined by the very person who follows behind him! How faith can lead to such a culmination is a thorny question implied by the text.

In #18 ䷧ Work-on-What-Is-Spoiled, the inverse of #17, we are faced with the results of past actions. (Past acts of following?) Faith is not the issue, for this hexagram poses the question: what can be done about the accumulated effects of historical causes? Here we become cautious about the chain of cause-and-effect, not eager to throw ourselves into a new phase. Although the word 孚, fittingly, does not appear, perhaps trust between generations is implied in Line One: “If there is a [true] son, the old ones will be without blame.”(有子考無咎)

There are several nuances of 孚 in #49 ䷰ Revolution. The Judgment says: “On your own day you are believed” (己日乃孚). Even line 1, without mentioning 孚, seems to be about 孚, speaking of ties that are solidified as if “with cowhide” (鞶用黃牛之革). In Line 3, the trust is built up by consultation or “addressing the matter three times” (革言三就，有孚). In Line 4, 孚 is the precondition for “changing the mandate” (有孚改命). In Line 5, the great man wins trust through bold, dramatic change, as if “showing the stripes of a tiger” (大人虎變，未占有孚). Clearly, 孚 is essential in all phases of a Revolution.

The inverse of Revolution is #50 ䷁ Cauldron, when state institutions gain stability. In the Shang and early Zhou dynasties, the casting of a cauldron was emblematic of state authority. Cauldrons were often patterned with animal motifs, perhaps to indicate that less civilized peoples had been brought within a new dispensation of power. (This reminds me of the woodcarved relief panels that decorate some American courthouses, where greenery is turned to a decorative pattern.) The lines of this hexagram, for the most part, deal with questions of whether a resource can be made available for people’s use. Clearly, the Cauldron marks an Apollonian,

rather than a Dionysian stage.

In all the pairs mentioned above, the hexagram containing 孚 involves taking a leap of faith or being open-hearted, while the inverse hexagram, lacking 孚, takes a more literal-minded view of reality. These alternations indicate a systole-dystole in the symbolism, an in-breath and out-breath tied to expansions and contractions of human will. Such an alternation appears in the sequence, though not maintained evenly, and it sometimes gets turned around. We cannot expect this breathing, on the scale of a cosmic dance, to keep a regular pace all of the time!

Speaking of alternations, the steady buildup of power from within, beyond external controls, is also related to 孚's meaning. This is partly a matter of faith, but also a matter of accepting what is inevitable. Thus 孚 is found in both #43 ䷧ and #44 ䷤, where ebb and flow of power is a structural theme.

In the Judgment of #23 ䷧ Splitting Away, the "not furthering to undertake something" is the antithesis of 孚. Yin is the growing principle, but expressing itself here as a decadent tendency. The forces being played out are cause for concern, not something to believe in or identify with. Why doesn't 孚 appear in the inverse hexagram---#24 ䷗ Renewal? To me it is implied in Line 5, the "well-grounded renewal"(敦復). The word "well-grounded" implies a generosity in dealing with other living things, an agreement of purpose, which is very compatible with 孚. Besides, the principle of new life in #24 is mostly absorbed in animating what it can animate. The impulse to bring things alive amounts to 孚 without needing to be conscious of 孚. [Even the absence of a word can be significant in the *I CHING*.]

The 孚 s at #58.2 and #58.5 also relate to the structural motif of ebb and flow, but in this case within the two 兌 Dui trigrams of 兌 . Both lines come near the mouth of the Dui trigram 兌 , where Dui the Joyful is about to break open. Line 2 speaks of “giving your heart to Dui [Fruition]” (孚兌). Line 5 speaks of “giving your heart to what splits away” (孚于剝). Here there is promise of joy in what splits away, though we did not find it in #23 剝 . In #58 the splitting away happens at a fruitful time, right near the culmination. In this case it is yin that breaks open at the top, to let the fruition happen. [In #23.6 a giant fruit was mentioned, but it was probably doomed to be wasted.]

The entrance of a single broken line in #44 夬 Encounter comes with a sort of impact, like the appearance a demon. Here the structural motif of ebb and flow focuses on the advent of yin, which the other lines have to deal with. In Line One, “the sickly pig charges about with complete abandon” (羸豕孚蹢躅), like one possessed. This unique use of 孚 expresses the passionate intensity of the creature, true to its own need for free action. Possibly this creature’s true character has been distorted by the observer (who may himself be lacking in 孚), but in any case the creature has 孚 of its own. [The suspicion in this line echoes the top line of #38 賁 Opposition, where the observer believes he sees a cartload of muddy pigs and demons, but puts down his bow and arrow at the last moment.]

Contrastingly, the 孚 at the beginning of #43 夬 Breakthrough relates to an utterance, a heartfelt outcry (孚號), responding to a relentless onslaught or inevitable upsurge of power [i.e., ebb-and-flow]. The cry uttered here also fits with the "speech" motif of the upper Dui trigram. All through the lines of the hexagram, someone presses onward resolutely through a host of hardships. This resolve makes

breakthrough possible, and it takes faith to summon up such resolve.

It is intriguing how 孚 is subverted and deliberately denied in #47 困 Impasse. You would expect 孚 here, since the superior man needs faith to get through an Impasse. Instead, the Judgment tells him "there is a dispute, and you are not believed." Apparently, difficulty in establishing trust is precisely what makes an Impasse. Line 2 and the ruling line 5 both have 紂 (fu2), which is a homonym of 孚 ---“oppressed by the one in red official tunic”...“oppressed by the one in the vermilion tunic” (困于赤紂/ 困於朱紂). The expectation of faith is raised by the sound fu2, but dashed by the reality of 紂, the robe-wearing officials.

There is also a denial of 孚 in Line 1 of #35 進 Advancement. You would think a man would need 孚 to advance in the world, but here "faith is put in abeyance" 罔孚 [wang3fu2]. Evidently, simpleminded faith is something to guard against as you begin on the road to preferment among the elites. Another negation of 孚 is found in #6 訟 Conflict: “Understanding [between them] is stifled, and they are on their guard...” (有孚窒，惕...)

In some hexagram pairs 孚 appears in both members, but different characteristics of faith are called for. Both #41 損 Decrease and #42 益 Increase contain the word 孚. In #41, it appears in the Judgment: “In [a time of] Decrease this one has faith...What should he use? Use two wooden bowls for an offering (損有孚...曷之用？二簋可用享).” The theme of this hexagram is getting back to fundamentals: living simply and staying close to one’s essential nature. The offering is kept simple here, as an affirmation of self-nature. The best expression of faith would be to keep

one's inner nature pure. The line statements in #41 bear out this approach to life. For instance, one experiences Decrease in Line 3, having been rejected by others, but only through this decrease does one find the friend one was meant to have: "When three people walk together, one of them will experience decrease; when one person walks, he will find his friend (三人行則損一人，一人行則得其友)." At the culmination of Decrease, in the top line, one stops looking at what happens in terms of increase and decrease (弗損益之); even if one is given an eminent position, one does not enrich oneself (得臣無家). This takes a special kind of renunciatory faith.

An offering is also made in #42 ䷗ Increase, at Line 2, but it is not the simple affair mentioned in #41: instead, it is an offering to the Lord of Heaven, performed in the king's name. The word 孚 in #42 occurs at Lines 3 and 5. The theme of Increase is to amplify and augment one's capabilities and assets, to make progress personally while engaging with events in progress. In Line 3, one is engaged to deal with an unfortunate event. Faith makes it possible to act in a balanced manner, and one is committed to acquire credentials (a jade plaque), so the leader will consider one's opinions. (益之用凶事，無咎。有孚中行，告公用圭。) In Line 5, the best course is to behave generously and in good faith. Eventually other persons of good faith will reward you for your virtue. (有孚惠心，勿問元吉。有孚惠我德。) The approach here is to take positive action, to engage with the instrumental complexes of the world. It is an interesting question whether the faith required in #41 is fundamentally different from that required in #42.

I believe there is also a Dionysian-Apollonian contrast between #29 The Abysmal and #30 The Clinging (䷮ and ䷌). The word 孚 appears in #29 but not #30. In

#29, one is challenged to plunge in and face an unpredictable, fluid series of events. The Judgment of #29 says: “Abysses in succession. One with faith will hold to the heart’s thread and make it through. In his actions there is something of higher value (習坎，有孚，維心亨，行有尚).” The commentator Cheng Yi says that #29, with its doubled theme of a yang center between two yin lines, depicts the vicissitudes that happen when “the mind falls into a material body.” Cheng Yi’s view of #29 evokes the drama of incarnation, where one’s essential nature (yang) is swept along by material circumstance, and one cannot know how life will play itself out. To be swept along by this, while still “holding to the heart’s thread” certainly is an act of faith.

There is indeed a contrast with #30, where the Li trigram’s clarity reveals the distinct outlines of our predicament! But in truth, we cannot draw a hard and fast line between the two, since the clear picture shown us by #30 is the very predicament we are living through in #29. And sometimes the representations we project in #30 can add to the karmic turbulence of #29. As the years fly by, the man in #30.3 is encouraged to drum on his clay pot and sing (日昃之離，不鼓缶而歌，則大耋之嗟). That sounds fairly Dionysian. And the water in #29.5, staying in low places and finding its own level, can provide a reflective surface (坎不盈，祇既平). That sounds pretty Apollonian. Together #29 and #30 make a *taiji* symbol, just as #1 and #2 do.

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