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Not exalting the gifted  
prevents quarreling.  
Not collecting treasures  
prevents stealing.  
Not seeing desirable things  
prevents confusion of the  
heart.

The wise therefore rule by  
emptying hearts and  
stuffing bellies, by  
weakening ambitions and  
strengthening bones.  
If men lack knowledge and  
desire, then clever people  
will not try to interfere.  
If nothing is done, then all  
will be well.

3

If you overesteem great  
men,  
people become powerless.  
If you overvalue  
possessions,  
people begin to steal.

The Master leads  
by emptying people's minds  
and filling their cores,  
by weakening their  
ambition  
and toughening their  
resolve.  
He helps people lose  
everything  
they know, everything they  
desire,  
and creates confusion  
in those who think that they  
know.

Practice not-doing,  
and everything will fall into  
place.

31

Don't glorify heroes, And  
people will not contend.  
Don't treasure rare objects,  
And no one will steal.  
Don't display what people  
desire, And their hearts will  
not be disturbed.

Therefore, the Sage rules By  
emptying hearts and filling  
bellies, By weakening  
ambitions and  
strengthening bones; Leads  
people Away from knowing  
and wanting;  
Deters those who know too  
much From going too far:  
Practices non-action And  
the natural order is not  
disrupted.

3

Do not glorify the achievers  
So the people will not  
squabble  
Do not treasure goods that  
are hard to obtain  
So the people will not  
become thieves  
Do not show the desired  
things  
So their hearts will not be  
confused  
Thus the governance of the  
sage:  
Empties their hearts  
Fills their bellies  
Weakens their ambitions  
Strengthens their bones  
Let the people have no  
cunning and no greed  
So those who scheme will  
not dare to meddle  
Act without contrivance  
And nothing will be beyond  
control

3

If you overly esteem  
talented individuals,  
people will become overly  
competitive.  
If you overvalue  
possessions,  
people will begin to steal.

Do not display your  
treasures  
or people will become  
envious.

The Master leads by  
emptying people's minds,  
filling their bellies,  
weakening their ambitions,  
and making them become  
strong.  
Preferring simplicity and  
freedom from desires,  
avoiding the pitfalls of  
knowledge and wrong  
action.

For those who practice not-  
doing,  
everything will fall into  
place.