

The Sage

1) Practices Non-Action; has power; is mysterious; paradoxical; embraces the One; Is One with the Tao: 2, 3, 15, 22, 23, 77, 78

2) Relies on actionless activity; does not strive with anyone, and achieves all: 2, 3, 81

3) Does his work without setting any store by it; does not linger over successes; accords with the Good; is like Tao; follows Tao; returns to Tao; is weak (like an infant): 22, 23, 28, 76, 77, 78, 79

4) Is Wise; banishes learning; rejects that, takes this; prefers what is within (Tao; "secret essence"); relies on wordless teaching; realizes that knowledge is ignorance; knows himself: 2, 3, 12, 15, 17, 19, 21, 27, 38, 71, 72, 81

INTERPRETATION: The Sage lives in accordance with the Tao and so is a "master" of life (has the power or potency of *te*).

- like a skilled artisan, the sage lives actionlessly
- is intentional only in the sense of being a conscious activity; but is not intentional in the sense of requiring (self-conscious) reflection
- applies to life generally as well as to specific skills or activities; they are actionless in seeming to require nothing at all

The Sage's wisdom hinges on a full appreciation of what it is like to be living, not a wisdom that can be explained (wordless teaching).

- the Taoist Sage is a true master at the art of living who appreciates being alive simply "for its own sake"
- evoked only in lived experience; in embracing the mystery and miracle of life, instead of thinking one has really mastered it

Hence, the *paradox* to Taoist ethics and "mastery", one must realize that life cannot ever be mastered in the sense of being adequately understood

- from this comes a power (*te*) from weakness
- a strength from yielding and letting go
- a mastery in living a balanced, peaceful, harmonious life
- a spiritual appreciation that one is not a separate being, in control of his or her own fate, but rather a part of life
- a way of being that can then be contrasted with the selfish egoism that divides us from Tao, as well as from each other and the rest of nature