

Hagakure

by Yamamoto Tsunetomo

People think that they can clear up profound matters if they consider them deeply, but they exercise perverse thought and come to no good because they do their reflecting with only self-interest at the center.

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It is difficult for a fool's habits to change to selflessness. In confronting a matter, however, if at first you leave it alone, fix the four vows [excellent, usefulness, piety, and compassion] in your heart, exclude self-interest, and make an effort, you will not go far from your mark.

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Because we do most things relying only on our own sagacity we become self-interested, turn our backs on reason, and things do not turn out well. As seen by other people, this is sordid, weak, narrow, and inefficient. When one is not capable of true intelligence, it is good to consult with someone of good sense. An advisor will fulfill the Way when he makes a decision by selfless and frank intelligence because he is not personally involved. This way of doing things will certainly be seen by others as being strongly rooted. It is, for example, like a large tree with many roots. One man's intelligence is like a tree that has been simply stuck in the ground.

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