



wu-wei 無為.

The concept of *wu-wei* is one of the central Daoist concepts. It is presented as a seemingly paradoxical slogan in Lao Zi's *Dao-De-Jing*, the literal sense of which is non-action. The apparent paradox arises because the fact of conforming to *wu-wei* is a kind of action *wei*-ing. The term '*wu-wei*' means one, or combined more than one, of the following depending on contexts and being sensitive to situations (especially see Chapters 2, 3, 10, 18, 25, 37, 40, 43, 48, 63, and 64 of the *Dao-De-Jing*):

- (1) do not do those things that are against being *natural* (non-excessive)
- (2) one should restrict one's activities to what is *natural* (or what is *naturally needed*)
- (3) do not do those things that go beyond natural limitation; for when a thing reaches one extreme, it reverts from it
- (4) cultivate oneself within and act in a natural (non-excessive) way, consciously/reflectively or spontaneously [a non-excessive but conscious natural way can be eventually developed into a highly-natural (effortless or spontaneous) way through cultivation]
- (5) act without pretentious "acting"
- (6) avoid doing unnecessary or excessive things in achieving something
- (7) avoid actions based *merely* on socialized values or desires, such as status, fame, or rank.
- (8) pursue the *dao* [capturing the (fundamental) way things are] through language engagement in a natural or *non-excessive* way: pay due attention to both the significant role of language (via guidance through language) in the *dao* pursuit and the limitation of language, instead of *indiscriminately* rejecting any rule-like guidance through language

What is at issue is what counts as being natural (non-excessive), what is naturally needed, or the natural limitation of a thing. Their identities are context-sensitive.

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Literature

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