

## **Non-Actional Politics and Religion: On the Possibility of a New Political and Religious Relationship**

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**Abstract.** Freedom, equality and justice are core categories of mutual conditions in the construction of contemporary political and religious orders. Different understanding and application of the three directly lead to conflicts between countries and religions. “non-action” integrates these basic ideas in a weakly regulated way, bringing the order foundation of politics and religion into a state of harmony, and giving politics and religion non-actional characteristics by analogy. Specifically, the non-actional politics and religion are freedom, which also are spontaneous order, inclusive and virtuous. Therefore, it creates the openness, pluralism and mutual communication of contemporary politics and religion, and makes people and gods systematically related to this world. As a result, the non-actional politics and religion establish a political and religious order based on sacredness, which has freedom, equality and relative justice.

**Keywords:** Non-action, Religion, Politics.

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## 1 Why should “non-action” be mentioned?

Ever since the modern times, freedom, equality and justice have been seen as the core categories of ideal and practice of politics. The separation of religion and government, and the relative freedom of faith can only be realized by the mutual regulation of them and the balanced tension between religion and government. However, the relationship between freedom and justice has no longer been in close connexion in the contemporary theory and practice of politics, of which the demonstrations were not only the universal acceptance of the internal contradiction of “Freedom is Justice” but also the less advertising of justice in the publicity by countries advocating the ideal of freedom. By contrast, the connexion between equality and justice seems to be closer. The priority of equal participation has replaced the status taken by freedom in the territory of ontology, since the uprising of the theory of justice of Rawls, and freedom has been guaranteed by equality and the order of justice has been defined by it as well.<sup>[1]</sup> Although there are other political philosophers like Hayek thinking that freedom was the core of order while equality and justice were just appendixes of it,<sup>[2]</sup> perspective like this failed to deal with the problem between religions and nations cross-regions and could not take place of the former all along.

So, in fact, the different understanding and application of some basic ideas like freedom, equality and justice, etc. by different governments and religions directly gave rise to the conflicts between them. It could even be said that conflicts between religions cross-regions and conflicts between religions and nations trans-regions could be more violent than simple conflicts between nations. For the situation mentioned above, people need a new religious-political order of inclusive type to harmonize the relationship among freedom, equality and justice to achieve a state relatively free, equal and just. Based on the acceptance of the differences of basic ideas, people should take a position more inclusive and make concessions under conferential reason to seek conversations more widely between governments-religions and religions-religions. To be more specific, during the construction of the new order, freedom, equality and justice are only “relative” and the subjective character of traditional authority (of religious and political kind) will be no longer preserved by them. Freedom, equality and justice would rather de-regulate themselves to make room for conservation and cooperation among them. Authoritative subjects (religious and political) will find in the inter-subjectivity (religious and political) the equality and differences of other subjects (religious and political) and make room for the meeting of just order based on the acknowledgement of others — that is the image demonstrated by the non-actional politics and religion.

## 2 The connotation and feature of “non-action”.

As one of the major concepts of Chinese philosophy, “non-action” means basically “doing nothing”. However, “doing nothing” means at here not standing still or having

no action at all but having objects being themselves without deliberated action from subjects. “Doing nothing” of non-action is hereby “doing everything”.<sup>[3]</sup> “Acting” could be conceived as “obtaining” while “Speech coming forth of itself is what is called (a mark of) the (true) Virtue.”<sup>[4]</sup> “Virtue”, as the use of inaction, is so fundamentally-connected with the obtaining of human beings, and both of them demonstrate the feature of function. However, the connotation of “virtue of Dao” is far beyond “obtaining of human beings”, and “talking about inaction” is therefore not just the description of words but also the path from Dao towards words. It is thus for words reasonable to talk about inaction. That is, utterances about inaction are fulfillment from “virtue of Dao” to “obtaining of human beings”, and humans may make a discourse within Dao for their obtaining from “virtue of Dao”. Therefore, the ideal of non-action and specific discourse about it made by humans are not opposition against the basic regulation of non-action in which the nature of religion and politics of non-action could be found. In a word, “non-action” was at first a philosophical concept of Daoism been widely used and thereafter became rapidly a religious and political concept. The concept of inaction will be in detail elaborated as follows.

First, inaction is concerning about Dao which refers both to the “Dao of Heaven” of Confucianism and the “Great Dao” of Daoism. *Ai Gong Wen* recorded that,

*The duke said, “I venture to ask what it is that the superior man values in the way of Heaven.” Confucius replied, “He values its unceasingness. There is, for instance, the succession and sequence of the sun and moon from the east and west — that is the way of Heaven. There is the long continuance of its progress without interruption — that is the way of Heaven. There are its making (all) things complete without doing anything — that is the way of Heaven. There is their brilliancy when they have been completed - that is the way of Heaven.”*<sup>[5]</sup>

And *Da Zong Shi* said that,

*This is the Dao; there is in It emotion and sincerity, but It does nothing and has no bodily form.*<sup>[6]</sup>

These texts imply that non-action is the way Dao operates.

Second, inaction is about “benevolence” and it is a way of moral practice. *Jie Bi* said that,

*True subtlety is the quality of the perfect man. What has he to do with strength of will, endurance, and fearfulness? A dull brightness shines about his exterior, and a clear brightness within him. The sage follows his desires, satisfies all his emotions, and at the same time is restrained, because he possesses reason. What has he to do with strength of will, endurance, or*

*fearfulness? The benevolent man practices the Way through inaction; the sage practices the Way through non-striving. The thoughts of the benevolent man are reverent; the thoughts of the sage are joyous. This is the way to govern the mind.*<sup>[7]</sup>

The “subtlety” mentioned above means refined perception which could only be accessed by **non-action**.

Third, as a way of governing for emperor, non-action generates one important concept of politics as “governing by non-interference”. *Wei ling gong* recorded that,

*The Master said, “May not Shun be instanced as having governed efficiently without exertion? What did he do? He did nothing but gravely and reverently occupy his royal seat.”*<sup>[8]</sup>

While *Li He Gen* recorded that,

*As a monarch, he takes non-action as the rule and treasures unselfishness. He manages all the officials by doing nothing, and assistants enter the court without his guide, opponents praised him without his any words, all officials do their duty without his care. So he does nothing, everything becomes. This is why the monarch should imitate the way of Heaven.*<sup>[9]</sup>

Fourth, “non-action” is related with religion. People should serve the spirits and sacrifice for the family and country with a non-actional mind. *Li Yun* recorded that,

*Thus, it was that the ancient kings were troubled lest the ceremonial usages should not be generally understood by all below them. They therefore sacrificed to God in the suburb (of the capital), and thus the place of heaven was established. They sacrificed at the altar of the earth inside the capital, and thus they intimated the benefits derived from the earth. Their sacrifices in the ancestral temple gave their fundamental place to the sentiments of humanity. Those at the altars of the hills and streams served to mark their intercourse with the spirits breathing (in nature). Their five sacrifices (of the house) were a recognition of the various business which was to be done. For the same reason, there are the officers of prayer in the ancestral temple; the three ducal ministers in the court; and the three classes of old men in the college. In front of the king there were the sorcerers, and behind him the recorders; the diviners by the tortoise-shell and by the stalks, the blind musicians and their helpers were all on his left and right. He himself was in the centre. His mind had nothing to do, but to maintain what was entirely correct.*<sup>[10]</sup>

Fifth, “non-action” is about cultivation of both body and spirit. *Zai You* of *Zhuang Zi* said that, “Therefore the superior man, who feels himself constrained to engage in the administration of the world will find it his best way to do nothing. In (that policy of) doing nothing, he can rest in the instincts of the nature with which he is endowed.”<sup>[11]</sup> The peak of it is to be the sage.

*There are five ways by which people could die, three of them can be removed by the sage and the other two can not—people can be saved from hunger and thirst, cold and the five weapons; but not from old age and ulcer-doctor. People died because of hunger and thirst, due to the lack of internal (energy); who died because of cold, due to the environment overcoming their body; those who died due to the five weapons, for the lack of virtue; who died due to the old age, on account of end of time; and people who died because of ulcer-doctor, by the exhaustion of the physical powers. If the internal cannot, therefore, run smoothly, the external licentiousness appears; the external licentiousness appears, then grudge follows; grudge follows, then diseases are outbreak. Hence (only) by doing nothing, the physical powers should stay calm.*<sup>[12]</sup>

Sixth, “non-action” is about to be immortal. *Gui Gu Zi* recorded that,

*Doing nothing and asking for peace, then the Five Organs and the Six Fu-organs work well; the spirits and souls hold on, then humans can look inwards, reflect on themselves, confirm their will, contemplate the Grand Void and prepare for the communication between spirits. Therefrom, humans can also watch the view of the open and close of cosmos, know how all things grow, see the beginning and ending of yin-yang and understand the rule of the mundane. Humans also can know what happened outside without leaving house, watch the sky even blocked by the window. Without seeing one can know, without walking one can arrive, that is perceiving of Dao.*<sup>[13]</sup>

And *Han Shi Wai Zhuan* said that,

*Therefore, only by doing nothing can one live a long life, with eyes and ears working, and not to be involved in anything.*<sup>[14]</sup>

It is thus clear that “non-action” is a necessary path for the longevity.

According to the discourse above, there are four basic features of “inaction”:

- (1) Non-action is free;
- (2) Non-action is a spontaneous order;<sup>[15]</sup>
- (3) Non-action is inclusive;
- (4) Non-action has the virtue of life.

The fundamental feature of “non-action” is both ontological and social as we will see as follows.

First, non-action is free. However, the freedom here cannot be elucidated from the perspectives of political philosophy or ethics, for non-action is neither political subject nor ethic subject. Non-action breeds the world, history and human beings and so it breeds the politics and ethics of men. Hence it is neither positive freedom or negative freedom of politics nor the free will or free choice of men. As ontological freedom, non-action is similar to “Being is” said by Sartre.<sup>[16]</sup> The freedom of “non-action” includes “nothingness” which means it is the same as “nothingness of generation” in which the structure of negation is included. Therefore, freedom of non-action refers to “dying for living” which expand the category of possibility while dispel regulations in the meantime. Second, non-action is spontaneous order of both nature and society, the fundamental regulation of which is “reality” and the being of which is prior to that which of human beings. *Kao Wei* expounded that,

*Someone asked him, “Confucius hated that name never stood until his death and detested fake names. What should we do?” He responded, “Why are you surprised? Name, is what refers to reality. Name should be consequent on the build of reality, not vice versa. So, people call long things long and short things short, because they are things first, then they have names. What Confucius cherishes, are the names which refer to reality. To cherish name is in order to cherish reality. Name attaches to reality just as all things attach to time—things germinate in spring, bloom in summer, fall leaves in autumn, and wither in winter. It works by doing nothing, and all things finish spontaneously.”<sup>[17]</sup>*

What is spontaneously completed by doing nothing is reality. And what is real, the order of nature and society, is adverse to the fake, the conspiracy of men.

Second, non-action has the virtue of tolerance/inclusiveness permeating all over the universe — it is the virtue in which the great virtue of life, the middle virtue of society and the small virtue of individual are all tolerated. *You Zuo* recorded that,

*Confucius was gazing intently at a waterway flowing eastward. Zigong asked Confucius, “Why is it that whenever a gentleman sees a large waterway, he is sure to gaze intently at it?” Confucius said, “When the waterway is large, it provides for the various living things in an all-encompassing fashion, without any ulterior motive — this resembles virtue. Its flow is toward sunken and low places, and even through curves and bends it is sure to follow this pattern — this resembles Yi. Its gushing current is never depleted or exhausted — this resembles the Way. If someone opens a channel for it to go*

*through, its response is as swift as an echo, and it rushes at crevasses a hundred fathoms deep without fear — this resembles courage. When it pours into a basin, it is sure to achieve a balanced, level state — this resembles following proper models. When it fills up a place, one does not need a leveling stick — this resembles adhering to correctness. Being soft and supple, it reaches into even minute spaces — this resembles keen discernment. By going into and out of it, one uses it to become fresh and clean — this resembles being transformed to goodness. Even through ten thousand turns, it is sure to head east — this resembles having settled intentions. For these reasons, whenever a gentleman sees a large waterway, he is sure to gaze intently at it.”<sup>[18]</sup>*

The virtue of non-action includes everything like water. For gentlemen it manifests as morality and rite, in society it manifests as breeding and tolerating, among different cultural traditions and ideologies it manifests as being-with pluralist and open.

At last, non-action has the virtue of life. *Han Shi Wai Zhuan* recorded that, “Fortune derives from non-action, and lust is the mother of all miseries.”<sup>[19]</sup> which means non-action is the great generation of Dao guided by happiness and goodness. The goodness has both reference to the level of tool and care of the level of purpose and consequence. Goodness is the goal to which politics and religion both head, and they are as a whole within the category of non-action, to each the connotation of goodness and path to it are different though. We can hereby understand that the features of non-action will define the effects non-action would have in contemporary order of religion and politics.

### 3 The Possibility of Non-action in Politics and Religion

“Non-action” has its peculiar connotation in politics and religion; however, at first, we have to inspect the fundamental feature and original implication of it, and, based on former inspection, make some reformation to it in order to match the expression of contemporary religion and politics.

#### 3.1 The Essential Feature of Non-action

As what has been mentioned above, “non-action” is not “doing nothing” but “doing everything”. “Acting” cannot be reckoned as the fundamental regulation of “non-action”, so is “the fake (the action of mortal)” for in entire hominine or natural action there are deliberations. <sup>[20]</sup> Therefore, as the event of “weakening” operating independently in the territories of metaphysical category and substantive category, regulation of non-action, just like the difference between “*différence*” and “*différance*”<sup>[21]</sup>, takes its root in irreducible subtlety. Hence, by taking “weakening” as the formal

regulation of its self, that is, with the way of opening its boundary, weakening its given regulation and preserving to the minimum extent, non-action meets the surrounding events and things. The conversation between entire mortal acting and entire nature is thus possible by the medium of human being.

Therefore, the nature of “weakening” could be called “non-action” which by de-regulation evolves pluralistic and abundant contents, that is, the essential feature of non-actional politics and religion. Non-actional politics and religion intend to build a social horizon open, pluralistic and conversational, the constructive form of which are reduction of rules, opening of boundaries and conversations brought about by the event of “weakening”. Abundant political and religious contents would be prominent and prosperous due to the concession made by (rules of) subject, while the subject would also be renewed and replenished due to the concession it made. Hence, “weakening” must be the primary principle and essential feature in constructing “non-actional” politics and religion.

### 3.2 The Political Nature of “Non-action”

As an ideal of politics, non-action has a long history. Non-actional politics means on the one hand strategy of governing guided by recuperating and quieting the masses. *Wei Ling Gong* recorded the strategy of the ruling of Shun as, “the Master said, “May not Shun be instanced as having governed efficiently without exertion? What did he do? He did nothing but gravely and reverently occupy his royal seat.””<sup>[22]</sup> *Lao-Tzu* expatiates it as,

*Not to value and employ men of superior ability is the way to keep the people from rivalry among themselves; not to prize articles which are difficult to procure is the way to keep them from becoming thieves; not to show them what is likely to excite their desires is the way to keep their minds from disorder. Therefore, the sage, in the exercise of his government, empties their minds, fills their bellies, weakens their wills, and strengthens their bones. He constantly (tries to) keep them without knowledge and without desire, and where there are those who have knowledge, to keep them from presuming to act (on it). When there is this abstinence from action, good order is universal.*  
[23]

Although the political ideal is full of idealism, some monarchs still chose some of it, especially in the beginning of a new dynasty. On the other hand, non-actional politics was also the political ideal and preference held by monarchs. Shun, for his great morality, was deemed as an ancient sage by *Lao-tzu*. As for the governing by the sage, *Lao-tzu* said that,



*A state may be ruled by (measures of) correction; weapons of war may be used with crafty dexterity; (but) the kingdom is made one's own (only) by freedom from action and purpose.*

for

*In the kingdom the multiplication of prohibitive enactments increases the poverty of the people; the more implements to add to their profit that the people have, the greater disorder is there in the state and clan; the more acts of crafty dexterity that men possess, the more do strange contrivances appear; the more display there is of legislation, the more thieves and robbers there are.*

*Therefore, a sage has said, "I will do nothing (of purpose), and the people will be transformed of themselves; I will be fond of keeping still, and the people will of themselves become correct. I will take no trouble about it, and the people will of themselves become rich; I will manifest no ambition, and the people will of themselves attain to the primitive simplicity." [24]*

It can be seen from this that the foundation of teachings of the sage is the transcendence of the sage which originated from Dao. The sage knows best about what is accomplished by Dao. *Lao-tzu* recorded that,

*All in the world know the beauty of the beautiful, and in doing this they have (the idea of) what ugliness is; they all know the skill of the skillful, and in doing this they have (the idea of) what the want of skill is. So it is that existence and non-existence give birth the one to (the idea of) the other; that difficulty and ease produce the one (the idea of) the other; that length and shortness fashion out the one the figure of the other; that (the ideas of) height and lowness arise from the contrast of the one with the other; that the musical notes and tones become harmonious through the relation of one with another; and that being before and behind give the idea of one following another. Therefore, the sage manages affairs without doing anything, and conveys his instructions without the use of speech. All things spring up, and there is not one which declines to show itself; they grow, and there is no claim made for their ownership; they go through their processes, and there is no expectation (of a reward for the results). The work is accomplished, and there is no resting in it (as an achievement). [25]*

The “governing” and “civilizing” of the sage is in essence the words of Dao which are derived from the freedom and the virtue of nurturing of Dao, and men shall thus decrease their deliberated scheme. That is the what can be learned from the remarks that,

*He who devotes himself to learning (seeks) from day to day to increase (his knowledge); he who devotes himself to the Dao (seeks) from day to day to diminish (his doing). He diminishes it and again diminishes it, till he arrives at doing nothing (on purpose). Having arrived at this point of non-action, there is nothing which he does not do. He who gets as his own all under heaven does so by giving himself no trouble (with that end). If one takes trouble (with that end), he is not equal to getting as his own all under heaven.<sup>[26]</sup>*

Therefore, the great governing could be accomplished if monarchs can imitate the words and deeds of the sage and follow the operation of Dao. Lao-tzu said that,

*The Dao in its regular course does nothing (for the sake of doing it), and so there is nothing which it does not do.*

*If princes and kings were able to maintain it, all things would of themselves be transformed by them.*

*If this transformation became to me an object of desire, I would express the desire by the nameless simplicity.*

*Simplicity without a name*

*Is free from all external aim.*

*With no desire, at rest and still,*

*All things go right as of their will. <sup>[27]</sup>*

The origin of the political nature of “non-action” could be described by “*analogia entis*”. <sup>[28]</sup> By the way of analogy, non-action of Dao circulates among nature, sages, countries, monarchs, spiritual practitioners and common folks. *Zhuang Zi* said that,

*It was the Way of the Dis and Kings to regard Heaven and Earth as their Author, the Dao and its characteristics as their Lord, and Doing-nothing as their constant rule. Doing-nothing, they could use the whole world in their service and might have done more; acting, they were not sufficient for the service required of them by the world. Hence the men of old held non-inaction in honor. When superiors do nothing and their inferiors also do nothing, inferiors and superiors possess the same virtue; and when inferiors and superiors possess the same virtue, there are none to act as ministers. When*

*inferiors act, and their superiors also act, then superiors and inferiors possess the same Dao; and when superiors and inferiors possess the same Dao, there is none to preside as Lord. But that the superiors do nothing and yet thereby use the world in their service, and that the inferiors, while acting, be employed in the service of the world, is an unchangeable principle.* <sup>[29]</sup>

Non-action operates from the way of heaven to the way of humans, and then to the concrete politics between monarchs and officials. *Chun Qiu Fan Lu* likened politics to living organisms and inaction was the key to its nursing.

*The monarch of a country, like the heart of a body. He hides himself in seclusion in deep mansion, as heart lies beneath the chest. His unparalleled glory, just as the incomparable spirit of heart. The top of the body is clear and bright, and the bottom muddy and grave, which is similar to the cherishing of eyes and the despising of feet. He appoints officials unbiasedly, like doing all our duties on our limbs. With four aides inside, as heart is surrounded by liver, lung, spleen and kidney; with officials of all ranks and descriptions outside, as heart has body and orifices. Getting close to the sage, like spirits assemble in the heart; the obedience between high and low, just as the support in the limbs. Distributing grace as original fluid flows past the texture of the skin; people all found their proper places, as physical powers keep calm and body frees from suffering. Non-action contributes to great peace as mysterious energy (of nature) pass through abyss spontaneously; (the appearance of) (royal) dragon and phoenix, as spirits gets elegant daughter and immortal plant.* <sup>[30]</sup>

It is thus can be seen that the non-action of politics is derived from that which comes from Dao and is hereby possessed of the features possessed by the non-action of Dao.

Furthermore, what needs to be emphasized is that the “*analogia entis*” of Dao is similar to the “*analogia entis*” of God or other holy being for they are all the incarnation of the holy in the category of “World-Words of Human”. Likely, the “*analogia fidei*”<sup>[31]</sup> of Dao is also developed in the dimension of religious practice. In specific, “*analogia entis*” and “*analogia fidei*” both manifest the “internality” and “externality” of the way of faith within the category of reality no matter if it is personal God or impersonal Dao and Brahma to be conceived as the holy being or holiness. Heidegger conceived “*Be-wandtnis*” as the existence of being within the world<sup>[32]</sup> while Panikkar claimed that the unknown Christ, as a substance, is many names<sup>[33]</sup>; they all implied the variety of the relationships between the holy and the world. According to John Hick that the holy substance (sacred being) is transcendent while people may have different experience to it.<sup>[34]</sup> In the way of this, “*analogia entis*” is to some extent an analogy of the sacred and

the analogy as such is possible. As the form of substance, analogy reveals the similarity, belonging to the transcendent being, of category of pure relationship. Therefore, although some scholars conceive Dao as a product of primitive religion or natural worship,<sup>[35]</sup> it does no harm to the sacredness of Dao. In addition, for scholars like Karl Barth, etc. “*analogia fidei*” is far closer to God than “*analogia entis*” for faith is prior to being and is thus prior to human beings. However, in Daoism, Buddhism and even Hinduism “*analogia fidei*” is not that important because the ultimate being of those religions do not require a priority of it, and they instead attach importance to the understanding to ultimate being by men and the restoration and unity with it. In other words, “*analogia fidei*” is harmonized in the being of the sacred within the restoration and unity with ultimate being. Therefore, the sacredness of Dao ensures the legality as the origin of politics even if the faith to Dao is not as strong as that which to God. After all, Dao is the world where human beings and their politics dwell.

After the elucidation of the origin of non-actional politics in ancient China, non-actional politics needs to be fitted into contemporary politics, for the key feature of ancient politics is succeeded to contemporary politics and is still working: as a way of social management and participating, the subject of politics did not change and the goal of politics is all along aimed at the being of men. Hence the original concepts of politics should be reformed to fit the contemporary discourse system of politics. Therefore, what should be at first cared is the feasibility of political institution, that is, if democracy may take place of monarchy to practice non-actional politics in the times of representative politics. To be specific, by examining the generation of social organizations and political systems, it could be found that order and hierarchy are inevitable products of modern society and the root of which is the being-with correlation and value boundedness of men.<sup>[36]</sup> On the level of value, there is internal coherence between non-action of Daoist tradition and post-modern society for they all intend to drive the limitation of value out of being-with correlation. On the level of political system, modern democracy, compared with monarchy, contains ideals as freedom, equality and natural rights, etc. which are more beneficial to the construction of just social order, and it is hence more suited for a political system of “less-interference”. In modern politics, government performs a role of night watchman<sup>[37]</sup> who to the maximum extent returns the non-political rights to society and seeks a kind of just situation with pluralistic participation. It realizes the principle of inaction respectively from the angle of regulations dissipating, boundaries eliminating and contents opening. From the perspective of the participants of politics (especially the policy-makers), human beings (as individual or group) are the subject participating the politics and making the policies; it is the political needs of men that decide the characters of decisions — whether it is personal opinion or collective opinion shown in the policies, agreed by minority or majority, the will of public or that of all.<sup>[38]</sup> In other words, politics is throughout of the nature of humans, and the legality of the politics of men is compliant with Dao (gods) by which it means politics

can only be sustained when it coincides with the nature of men and law of nature. Just like what Cicero said that, “Law is the power of nature, the prudence and rationality of the wise, the criterion of just and unjust.”<sup>[39]</sup> The goal of politics is all along concerning about its legality and the earthy fate of its constructors. Therefore, “non-action” could be the political feature of men which is still appropriate to modern political system.

Next is the feasibility of the teaching by the sages. Sages are not spiritual being like ghosts, gods and immortals who are totally different from the mortal, nor are they mere the wise men among the mortal; in ancient times, they are the ones who get accessed to the providence, the best among the many, the leader of people, the head of priests and the great prophet — they are ones closest to Dao. Compared with common people, the nature of sages makes them in every aspect more transcendent than that of the former, and they often influence the actual politics with their ideals. Therefore, in modern politics, the so-called sages should be described as the ones who have strong influence and are capable of making extraordinary political foresight. In this way, the relationship of Dao-sages-monarchs in ancient society can be transformed into providence-political leaders-political institutions in modern society. By the comparison between the relationships of the traditional kind and the modern kind, it is easy to know that the policy maker had been transformed from monarchs (and their staff) to political parties and governments (as a whole), and the elites working on political edification had been transformed to political leaders. What has to be noticed here is that a political leader needs not to be the leader of a party or government, and it is his/her influence and ability in politics that will decide if he/she could be a political leader. Interestingly, Hitler and Stalin seem to be fitted for the definition above, but, actually, the extraordinary political insight here contains no ruling and ambition anti-human. Comparatively speaking, Gandhi is more likely to be conceived as a sage.

The last one is the problem about the legality (*Legitimität*) and rationality (*Rationalität*) of non-action in modern politics. According to Habermas, legality means a political order that is worthy of acknowledgement and rationality means political practice regulated by purposive rationality and behavior rationality.<sup>[40]</sup> The legality (*Legitimität*) and rationality (*Rationalität*) mentioned above are little different from that of Weber, Weber thought that legality is stability of given polity, that is, the acknowledgement to authority’s status and obedience to its order; and, rationality means only purpose-behavior rationality.<sup>[41]</sup> Therefore, non-action politics with legality means that it is an acknowledged political order, and policy makers and politics participants will proceed their practice within the frame of non-action politics — that is, to participate less and plan less, which are complied with purposive rationality and behavior rationality.

As what has been mentioned, non-action politics has two connotations: the governing strategy that mainly recuperates and quiets the masses, and the ideal natural politics. In

fact, both connotation is applicable for contemporary politics. To be specific, on the one hand, twentieth century contains for human beings a whole lot of miseries, people are eager to be liberated from political ambition and its oppression; on the other hand, in order not to repeat a disastrous blunder, people must find a political attitude, which is more compatible to nature and the earth, different from political revolution brought about by industrial revolution. The politics as such is different from utopia for it is built upon the earth. Utopia asks people to be the same in essence while non-action politics allows people to be pluralistic. The inclusion and constant development of different political ideals of people can only be possible within a political order that is peaceful, inclusive and pluralistic. Politics of non-action calls for de-politicalization and de-polarization, that is, less planning, less conflicts and more tolerance, these are the basis of freedom order. The legality of non-actional politics is thus certified.

As for the rationality of non-actional politics, it has to be understood from the political nature of men. Aristotle claims that human beings are animals of politics by which it means in nature of men there are political features, that is, men are willing to participate and construct a public relationship. We have to notice that it is not an opinion needing to be forsaken but an opinion incomplete in its intension for it does not explicate the isness of politics, nor does it explicate the oughtness of politics, while the only thing been explicated is the human origin of this hypothetical political situation. Some people may quote the state of war between men said by Hobbes to testify the nature of conflict of men; however, in fact, according to Hobbes, conflict is a product of rationality in the second place. He said that,

*“That every man, ought to endeavour Peace, as far as he has hope of obtaining it; and when he cannot obtain it, that he may seek, and use, all helps, and advantages of War.”* The first branch, of which Rule, contain the first, and Fundamental Law of Nature; which is, *to seek peace, and follow it.* The Second, the sum of the Right of Nature; which is, *by all means we can, to defend ourselves.* <sup>[42]</sup>

Therefore, seeking peace is preferred by rationality. Ideal as such also coincides with that of Adam Smith and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and the only difference resides in what people would do when failing to resolve contradictions. People will astoundingly find that it is not war but peace that is what they seek for, if they take a look at “veil of ignorance” set by Rawls. It means that rationality seems to have a de-politicalization feature that people would not concern about politics too much in given peaceful situation. In fact, the war situations are often unnecessary for they are either plotting against plotting or plotting themselves through others, and in the latter situation their selves are vanished in plotting. It is easy to see that non-action coheres with purposive rationality and behavior rationality, and the rationality of non-actional politics is thus certified.

### 3.3 The Religious Nature of Non-Action

Different from the political nature of non-action, the religious nature of non-action is mainly demonstrated by means of analogy. Before the elucidation of the topic we will at first inquire the relationship between religion and non-action. *Li Yun* recorded that,

*Thus, it was that the ancient kings were troubled lest the ceremonial usages should not be generally understood by all below them. They therefore sacrificed to God in the suburb (of the capital), and thus the place of heaven was established. They sacrificed at the altar of the earth inside the capital, and thus they intimated the benefits derived from the earth. Their sacrifices in the ancestral temple gave their fundamental place to the sentiments of humanity. Those at the altars of the hills and streams served to mark their intercourse with the spirits breathing (in nature). Their five sacrifices (of the house) were a recognition of the various business which was to be done. For the same reason, there are the officers of prayer in the ancestral temple; the three ducal ministers in the court; and the three classes of old men in the college. In front of the king there were the sorcerers, and behind him the recorders; the diviners by the tortoise-shell and by the stalks, the blind musicians and their helpers were all on his left and right. He himself was in the centre. His mind had nothing to do, but to maintain what was entirely correct.<sup>[43]</sup>*

According to *Li Yun*, benevolent monarch should treat sacrifice with attitude of non-action. It means at first the meaning of sacrifice was to convey rites to world and monarch should not against it but follow it naturally. Second, it is clergies" but not monarch's concern about sacrifice, that is, religious institution should be separated from governmental management and monarch should devoted himself to hold justice without excessive concern about religious affairs. We can know from analogies previously mentioned that, in modern politics, that is, the relationship structure of providence-political leaders-political institutions, religious organizations should keep proper separated from political leaders-political institutions. So, in fact, it can be the foundation of the separation of religion and politics, and even the foundation of the principle of liberty of faith, only that the modern understanding to the latter was built upon the free separation of mind and body.

What is next to be discussed are analogies in religious aspect of non-action, that is, the question about the possibility and contents of analogies as such. About the feasibility of analogy as methodology, in the previous discussion about "*analogia entis*", we have already conformed that as analogy of sacredness, "*analogia entis*" has a prior legality. What is to be concerned here is that whether religion (as organizations and ideals) is external to the category regarding "*analogia entis*" --this question involves the problem

of the development of “*analogia fidei*” in the world of human. According to definitions set by Religious sociologists,<sup>[44]</sup> religion consists institutions, organizations, ceremonies and ideals, and we are going to analyse the possibility of analogies of them respectively.

To be specific, compared with political institution, what is peculiar about religious institution is that the direction of it heads to ultimate being which means it is not the authority of mundanity but that of divinity that is built, and it is not monarch or congress but the Lord of creators that is served; likewise, religious institution is by the same peculiarity distinguished from political institution, while, there is no essential difference of personnel makeup and functional distinction between them. At the same time, by inspecting political ceremonies, we can find that almost all the political ceremonies are originated from religious ceremonies. The essential difference between them resides not in the level of technical operations but in the level of sacredness. As for the implements and symbols representing divinity, and the forms of ceremonies and postures of participants as well, they are in nature “*analogia entis*”. At last, by means of analogy, religious thoughts convey providence and eventually achieve the integrity of the way of faith. In apocalyptic religions, the words of divinity is realized by revelation expressed in types of speech, classics, incarnation, prophets, churches and prophecies and so on. In non-apocalyptic religions, the delivery of providence is mainly realized by personal meditation and comprehension to reality--living within God, and achieving the unity with God. Synthetically observing, we can find that, providence, in both apocalyptic and non-apocalyptic religions, always impose upon men. In other words, religious thoughts cannot exist without men (referring to religions of human beings alone) who are the objects of divined speech, writers of divined classics, realizers of divined providence, constitutors of religion and the son of God even. Therefore, religious thoughts are analogy of divined words, existing in the medium of men.

Thereupon, core features of religion as institution, organization, ceremony and thought do not overstep the category of “*analogia entis*”, and the feature of sacredness is further added when non-action of Dao is included in religion in the way of analogy. Specifically speaking, non-action manifests the divinity itself. By the medium of men, the words of divinity accomplished all beings in religion. Believers constituting religion, by means of divined words, seek for the sacred of transcendence and non-action, and religion is hereby possessed of the feature of non-action. Therefore, the result of the religious analogy of non-action are features of non-action possessed by religion, that is, the freedom of “non-actional religion” is a spontaneous order which is possessed of tolerance and virtue of life.<sup>[45]</sup> The proposition will be elucidated as follows.

At first, freedom of non-actional religion is freedom of idea. The only obstacle of freedom as such is contradiction within idea, that is, idea or belief within non-actional



religion cannot be paradoxical to each other, such as people cannot obtain benefaction by saving others and killing others as well. Therefore, the basic regulation of ideal freedom is formal foundation of the existence of non-actional religion. We have to notice that freedom of idea does not against conflicts between different religions for, after all, humans' ideas are not ultimate truth and they share a common direction of sacredness. At the same time, freedom of non-actional religion is practical freedom which means people's acts of faith share and construct the developing divined words. However, the freedom of practice is not that universal as that of idea. To change the category of reality it needs various features to work. Therefore, religious practice cannot eliminate the regulations of given society as what idea does to the boundary of category. Therefore, rather than sticking to the given order of its self and expand it, freedom of religious practice is inclined to the self-elimination of regulation to open its self to other religions.

Second, as a spontaneous order, non-actional religion emphasizes the sacredness of religion. The essence of religion resides in collectively seeking transcendence and then step towards ultimate being. Therefore, the human nature of religion should be declined while the divined nature should be enhanced. According to doctrines of different religions, living in the world is just a process in the way to the ultimate while people too much care the process and add in it too much the nature of humanity and material. Hence, "religion of non-action" intends to eliminate the portion belonged to men alone in religious thoughts and make religion thoughts more coincided with divined nature. It requires people to retrospect the origin, introspect the humanity portion in religion thoughts and abandon the doctrines unrelated to the divined nature. Therefore, dogmatic ideas like "gentiles deserve no salvation" or "a man can marry four wives" shall be abandoned in modern times.

Once again, the inclusiveness possessed by non-actional religion can be described as: a religion should respect ideals and practices of other religion unless it is forced to change by the latter. The preservation of religion must be based on divinity and so is its change. Therefore, a specific religion shall not actively force other religions to change their thoughts and practices, nor shall it easily forsake the order of its own. Even exclusive religions shall have no rights to convert others for faith itself is against compulsion. In specific, inclusiveness of "religion of non-action" stems from anti-homogenization of divinity and consistency of transcendence. The feature of "doing everything" demonstrated in divinities of many religions implies divinity is not a summation of thoughts and practices claimed by one specific religion. At the meantime, it means the transcendence pursued by different religions can be achieved by various ways, and the ideal of "religion of non-action" expands possibilities of the pursuing.

At last, non-actional religion has the virtue of life which is great goodness and the guardian to the sustained by divinity. Therefore, it is the proper product of the joint

development among various religions and the criterion of conflicts and conversations between religions as well. Therefore the virtue of life in religions can be stated as: a religion is possessed of the virtue of life if the goal and means of it is of goodness. The goodness mentioned here is the goodness of totality. Men cannot achieve absolute goodness, nor can men make absolute guarantee about the goodness streamed out of them. The purposive goodness of religion is to achieve universal transcendence while methodological goodness is meant to preserve others when seeking for transcendence. What non-actional religion pursued is doing something in “doing nothing”, and the realization of universal transcendence in development peaceful and clam. Therefore, the virtue of life is the guardian of religions pursuing sacredness.

In this way, connotations of non-actional religion have been clearly elucidated and the possibilities of non-actional religion have been certified.

#### **4 Religion of “Non-Action” and Political Practice**

Ideals of politics and religion of “non-action” are powerful sources of constructing a new contemporary religious-political relationship. However, we have to pay attention to the regulation of the construction itself, that is, the construction of order, as an acting event, must ensure its rationality, and “non-action” cannot descend to the excuse of enslaving others. In other words, “non-action” must be endogenic which means it would not enslave any subject. Therefore, we have to clarify features of the practice of “non-action”.

On the one hand, “non-action of self” should be differentiated from “non-action of others”, that is, the “non-action” of subject and “making others to do nothing”, the “non-action” of actor and the be-acted. “Non-action of self” is spontaneous de-regulating in which subject is no object to itself or others. Non-action is accomplished naturally which needs no other structural regulations; in the deconstruction of original regulations, “non-action” manifests itself. In comparison, “non-action of others” refers to actions or events making others to become non-actional in which the structure of “making...non-actional” is included. It tries “to regulate” through regulating, which forms a winning out among regulations. However, the priority of regulation is in itself against “to regulate”; thus, “non-action” deviates from its self once it becomes an additional structural regulation and actively expresses it as “making...”. After all, the action of containing others in “non-action of self” is not pragmatics of actively winning out. Hence “making...non-actional” possesses no practical legality for people cannot force “non-action” to others. What is needing to be noticed is that the expansion of “non-action” has other patterns such as opening its self and guiding others by which the structure of non-action is to “let non-action emerge in the world” and “let... gaze at non-action”. In an image of placid being, non-action appears in Dao.

On the other hand, religion of “non-action” and political practice should also be taken into consideration, that is, how would government treat religious problem with non-actional attitude and how would religion treat the religion policy of government? In fact, the principle of freedom of faith concentrated on the separation of religion and government is beneficial to both sides for they can stop intervening each other in the structure of providence-political leader-political institution and providence-religious leader-religious institution, let alone in modern politics it is hard for compulsive occupation to be the essence of politics while the core of politics are maintenance of stability and integration of internality. Therefore, political system and religious system can completely run in parallel, and one of the contributions made by secularization is the demarcation between them. In other words, it is just non-action that caused the historical separation of them, or rather, the separation of religion and politics is just the order of non-action—an order in which diverse cultures and diverse ideas could coexist. Therefore, people need no necessary to retreat to the theocracy, and by the order of non-action, government and religion all have their respective non-acting — government does not need to interfere what is distinguished to religion and so is religion to what is not concerned with divinity. By eliminating the boundary of rights, government makes room for spirit; by eliminating the impurities of humanity, religion makes room for divinity. At last, geographical borders constrained by governments and intrinsic cultural boundaries will be to a certain extent eliminated, and tolerance between different countries and religions will achieve equality, freedom and justice of a human order as a whole.

## 5 Epilogue

As formal expression of sacred Dao, non-action achieves pluralistic human culture by means of de-regulation. In territories of religion and politics, non-action constructs a spontaneous order with freedom, inclusiveness and the virtue of life. In post-modern society, it is important to recall the ideal of non-action, loaded with the duty to break the given religious and political order and make them tolerate and open, shadowed by given order. non-actional religion and politics have on the level of ideal and practice achieved their foundation of rationality and legality by which the order of equality, freedom and justice ensured by divinity could be established.

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3. In fact, “non-action” is a concept emphasized by Taoism but not unique to Taoism. This can be seen in the following. Therefore, the meaning of “non-action” in this article combines the essence of Taoism and Confucianism, and is a comprehensive philosophical interpretation.
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6. Legge, J. (trans.): *The Texts of Taoism*. Dover Publications, Inc., New York (1962), p.243.
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8. Legge, J. (trans.): *Confucianism: The Four Books and Five Classics*. Delphi Publishing Ltd, Hastings (2016), p.142. It is said in the *Tongdian*, records of emperors, “Shun did nothing but gravely and reverently occupy his royal seat, and sang the prose of Nan Feng. The ode says: notos’ coming, enrich people’s pockets; notos’ perfume, soothe the anger of them.” See *Du You: Tongdian*. Wang, W. (ed.). Zhong Hua Book Company, Beijing (1988), p.3698. Translated by the authors.
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20. “Nature has intentions” is one of the origins and contents of the original religious and philosophical ideas.
21. The concept of *différance* is different from the concept of *différence*. The meaning of the former can be understood as a combination of “delay of desire” and “comparison of difference”. The biggest difference between *différance* and *différence* is that *différance* is the deep regulation of difference, which signifies the impossibility of self-enclosed identity. Non-action stipulates the impossibility of totally man-made and totally natural, so it is the most fundamental stipulation. See Derrida, J.: *L’écriture et la différence*. Éditions du Seuil, Paris (1967), pp.117-137.
22. Legge, J. (trans.): *Confucianism: The Four Books and Five Classics*. Delphi Publishing Ltd, Hastings (2016), p.142.
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28. Analogia entis is a Christian theological concept. It takes the being (man) as its prototype and emphasizes the knowledge of God through reason. Here is expanded to take the being (man) as the prototype, emphasizing the recognition of the sacred through reason. Analogy, as a cognitive method, is one of the basic ways for people to understand nature and supernatural things, and it is also the basis for people to understand the Other. When looking at sacredness and transcendence, it is appropriate.
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31. Analogia fidei, a Christian theological concept, takes the relationship of faith as the prototype, emphasizing that people know God through complete obedience to God. This is expanded to take the relationship of faith as the prototype, emphasizing that people know the sacred by completely obeying the sacred. For the distinction and controversy between Analogia entis and Analogia fidei, analogia relationis and analogia gratiae, see writings of Erich Przywara, Karl Barth, Hans Urs von Balthasar and K. Hammer.
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36. Marx said, "But the essence of man is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations." ("Theses on Feuerbach", section VI, see Marx, K., Engels, F.: Collected Works Vol.5. International Publishers, New York (1976), p.4.) It implies the actualization of human coexistence. The limitation of human value means that people always try to establish a value system on their own. As a result, the value order of human is always full of injustice and violence.
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45. See the discussion of the meaning and characteristics of “non-action” in the previous article.

