

● little masters  
by philip golabuk

In Taoism, the essence of practice is “wu wei,” usually translated as “effortless effort” and represented by the movement of natural phenomena: the tumbling water of a river, clouds drifting in the sky, falling rain, the turning of the planets and the seasons.

We grown-ups seem to have a hard time with the “effortless” part of effort. We try our best, try harder, try and try again...but in none of this do we see the ease and efficiency of an allowing that moves things, not by some exerting, but by its very nature. The difference can be grasped quickly in the image of a leaf floating on a river. The leaf can rest in the natural motion of the water, or it can try to propel itself. From a bird’s-eye view, these two scenarios might look much the same, but we can see that the leaf’s effort to propel itself would be redundant, wasteful, pointless, since it’s flowing along anyway. By simply resting in the natural movement of the river, its effort becomes effortless.

Many students are concerned that if we abandon effort, nothing will happen in our lives. We’ll end up sitting on our hands, waiting. This, perhaps more than any other belief, reveals the hubris of Particle willfulness. Look around! Does the hand of Nature seem idle? Everywhere, we see a vitality, efficiency, creativity, and organizing intelligence that must humble us again and again. Each electron, each galaxy, is spinning with clockwork precision and with no exerting anywhere! Asleep in willfulness, we have fallen to believing that if we don’t make something happen, nothing will happen, but this is belied by all Creation.

I recall watching my grandson when he was about four months old. One of the most striking things about infants is their natural receptivity to nonlocal intelligence, the great Mystery that moves them as it does the rest of us and all things. The little hand “knows” to go to the mouth, as though Nature Herself taught the infant the essential gestures long before he could understand what makes them essential. My grandson was born “knowing” how to hold his head up, how to nurse, how to cry when he needed something. At three months, this knowing expanded to include smiling at familiar faces, and soon after, he began laughing out loud. Imagine—laughing! Astounding. He always responded with excitement when his mother read to him or held a picture book in front of him; something about him recognized and, in this sense, already “knew” language. This something later turned him over, got his arms to start pushing the ground away, and lifted his bottom while bringing his knees up under. Before we knew it, the whole house had to be re-baby-proofed to make way for this unstoppable effortlessness!

In all of this, we see that easy state of allowing native to every infant—a state of grace and gracefulness—a natural cooperation with the Field, which conceives, delivers, nurtures, and brings up all babies by becoming them. For all their natural knowing, they are innocent, in the original meaning of the word, “not knowing,” and in this knowing-through-not-knowing, they embody a profound and easy trust in the living

- moment at hand. Their efforts to gain control of their body and their world are effortless; at this point, they have no choice but to allow the Field to become more and more fully who they are. Later, of course, they will have a choice. We have this choice now. Babies have a great deal to teach us, simply because they have not learned to interfere, to judge, to resist. They have no separate agenda; their agenda is Life becoming greater Life before our eyes. And arguably, there is no other time in life that rivals these first months and years in sheer development, creativity, and achievement...all through the great efficacy of allowing.

Babies teach us to not so much lead our lives as follow them. There is something of the Taoist master in each of them, fulfilling the precept stated by Lao Tze in the *Tao Teh Ching*, and echoed by many great spiritual teachers, "Do nothing, and everything will be done."

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