Abstract

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"ON THE CONCEPT OF FREEDOM IN THE I CHING: A DECONSTRUCTIONIST VIEW OF SELF-CULTIVATION"

Traditionally, freedom has been thought in terms of freedom for, or in, or from. Major scriptures of the world's religious literature think freedom in a different light from these. For instance, Lao Tzu, 70, points up that we have no inherent ability (pu neng) to grow ourselves up into what, with rare exceptions, has been and continues to be unthought. This essay is a meditation toward thinking that thought anew in the context of self-cultivation and specifically within the Chinese tradition with principal reference to the Classic of Change, hexagram 1, lines 3, 4 and 5. Deconstructing the practice of self-cultivation is not meant as equivalent to destruction. Rather, it distinguishes radically between acting and living while holding these together in the two-fold of acting as teleologically determined and living as undominated by purpose. Self-cultivation, the way of the sage, is determined by the belonging together of two seemingly unrelated careers: 1) action subject to causality and 2) living unspecified by any mark of causalism. How can they belong together, and if they do belong together what delivers us from the self-misunderstanding that imagines them ever colliding on the same plane? This meditation contemplates that freedom within which this two-fold obtains both destinally and ecstatically.