The Taoist “Reverse” Concept of Language

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Abstract

The Taoist concept of language has distinguished itself from that of most philosophical schools in the world. This study of the Taoist application of “reverse mechanism” in language is based on two major texts, the Tao Te Ching and the Chuang Tzu. Three dimensions are discussed. First, in the metaphysical dimension, a comparative frame is made to delineate how the Taoist texts and the New Testament differ in assigning the role of language to the creation of the universe. Second, in the personal dimension, the Taoist's denial of the importance and use of language is manifested to see how language becomes an obstacle in the way of cultivating one’s virtue and establishing one’s career. Third, in the linguistic dimension, the Taoist’s distrust of language is expounded to tell how language is thought to be an incapable and unstable semiotic vehicle for exhausting meaning.

Key words: Taoism, Tao Te Ching, Chinese Philosophy, New Testament, Christianity, concept of language.