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A Translation of Chapter 58 of the *Daodejing* 道德經

and Its Annotation by Shi Deqing

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1. Original text and translation of chapter 58 of the *Daodejing* 道德經

1.1 Original text

「其政悶悶，其民醇醇。其政察察，其民缺缺。禍兮福所倚，福兮禍所伏。孰知其極，其無正耶。正復為奇，善復為妖。人之迷，其日固久。是以聖人方而不割，廉而不剝，直而不肆，光而不耀。」¹

1.2 Translation

The lenient politics of a country makes its people simple. The rigour of a country's politics can make people complain of discontent. The disaster is often accompanied by good fortune and the good fortune is often latent disaster. No one knows where the cycle ends and is not fixed. The sages correcting it becomes strange, and good things become wrong. Therefore, people have been obsessed with it and it has solidified people's perceptions. That's why saints have rules not to cut people, clean but not mean, blunt and not unbridled, shines but not dazzling.

¹ (明) 憨山德清 著 尚之煜 校釋：《老子道德經解》（北京：中華書局，2020年7月），頁119。

2. Original text and translation of Shi Deqing's 釋德清 annotation of chapter 58

2.1 Original text – Part A

「此詳言上章有為之害，而示之以無為之方也。悶悶，無知貌。所謂民可使由之，不可使知之之意。由百姓皆注其耳目，若示有知，即上云法令滋彰，盜賊多有矣。故聖人潛行密用，令其悶悶然若無所知。則民情不鑿，奸偽自然不生。故其政悶悶，其民醇醇。若其政令察察然分星擘兩，則民多不自安，缺缺然憂有餘矣。故云其政察察，其民缺缺。缺缺，多憂不足之意。」²

2.2 Translation of Part A

Here is a detailed explanation of the previous chapter that the disadvantage of the signs of action done with intention and expresses the benefits of without being. The Chinese characters 悶悶 is means a state of ignorance. This is the means of '民可使由之，不可使知之'(We can make the people practice the Tao, but we cannot make them understand the Tao.)' Since the attention of ordinary people is where they can see and hear, if they know more, the society will become as said above, '法令滋彰，盜賊多有(The more laws, the more thieves)'. Therefore, the sages secretly guided them and made them appear to be in a state of ignorance. In this way, the people can not be clear how and the people will naturally not crime. Therefore, it says '其政悶悶，其民醇醇.'If the decree is strict and clear, people will be afraid of violating it and will often present a state of anxiety. Therefore, it says '其政察察，其民缺缺'. The Chinese characters 缺缺 is means the state of anxiety that do not get enough.

² (明) 憨山德清 著 尚之煜 校釋：《老子道德經解》，頁 120。

2.3 Original text – Part B

「蓋禍福之機，端在人心之所萌。若其機善，則禍轉為福。若其機不善，則福轉而為禍。此禍福相倚伏也。由人機心不息，則禍福旋轉如循環之無端，人孰能知其止極耶。故孔子曰，知機其神乎，謂是故也。然禍福循環之如此，豈無真人而以理正之耶。」³

2.4 Translation of Part B

The motive of disaster and good fortune are both from in the moment of beginning in the heart. If this motive is good then the disaster will turn into the good fortune. However, if the motive is bad then the good fortune will turn into the disaster. Due to the desire in people's hearts is ceaseless, the disaster and the good fortune transform each other endlessly. However, the common people do not know where it will stop. Therefore, this is why Confucius said, '知機其神乎（How amazing it is to be able to perceive our motive）！' However, such a cycle of disaster and good fortune, how can there be no saints use the truth to correct this？

2.5 Original text – Part C

「但世衰道微，人心不古，邪正不分，善惡顛倒。本示之以正，則彼反以為奇詭。本教之以善，而彼反以為妖怪。正所謂未信而勞諫，則以為厲謗。此人心之迷固已久矣，縱有聖人之教，亦不能正之矣。莊子曰，三人行，一人迷方，猶有解者。二人惑，則不能易。今天下皆迷，其誰能解之耶。」⁴

³（明）憨山德清 著 尚之煜 校釋：《老子道德經解》，頁 120。

⁴（明）憨山德清 著 尚之煜 校釋：《老子道德經解》，頁 120。

2.6 Translation of Part C

However, the Dao of the world gradually weakened, people's hearts are not as simple as in ancient times, good and evil are not 'separated, they are reversed. What did the sages show that was true but was considered strange and weird. They teach people what is good and is considered strange by others. Like the old saying, '未信而勞諫，則以為厲謗(Frequent advice when others do not believe us can be mistaken for harsh criticism)'. This is because the human mind has been lost and stubborn for so long that even the teachings of the saints cannot correct it. Zhuang Zi said '三人行，一人迷方，猶有解者。二人惑，則不能易。(If three people walk together, one can guide him if he is lost, but if two people both are lost, it is difficult to guide them.)' However, all the world is lost today, and no one can guide them.

2.7 Original text – Part D

「是以聖人遊濁世以化民，貴在同塵和光，渾然無跡。故雖方而不傷其割。割，謂割截，乃鋒稜太露也。雖廉而不傷於劇。劇，謂刻削太甚也。雖直而不傷於肆。肆，謂任意無忌也。雖光而不傷於耀。耀，謂銜耀已見也。此聖人有所長，而能養其所長，故為天下貴。此所以無為而治，好靜而自安，無為而民自化矣。」⁵

2.8 Translation of Part D

The sages traveled through the murky world to civilize people. The key points of them is put his light in and to be ordinary like dust, leaving no trace. Therefore, their behavior is 'disciplined but not too sharp. The Chinese character 割 is means sever, the sharp is much show. They are clean but not exploited. The Chinese character 劇 is means exploited badly.

⁵ (明) 憨山德清 著 尚之煜 校釋：《老子道德經解》，頁 120。

Their straightforward but they does not just do what they want. The Chinese character 肆 is means just do what we want. They are shines but not dazzling. The Chinese character 耀 is means show off your ideas. This is the sages has the strength and can cultivate them strength. Therefore, they are the most noble in the world. That is why the sages does nothing and the state is governed, likes to be still and the people themselves are stable, doing nothing and the people themselves are influenced.

3. Commentary

When I translate '蓋禍福之機, 端在人心之所萌'. I have encountered a great difficulty. My main problem is the Chinese character '機'. In the Chinese dictionary it means 'the point at which things happen.' Therefore, I originally translated this character as the word key. I translated it this way because I thought it was a key point, but when I brought it back to the original it felt a little inappropriate. It is because the Chinese character '端' is mentioned later in the text. It means an end, a beginning or an end to something. Therefore, if the preceding character '機' is simply translated as the word 'key' it does not give a starting point or an ending point. Therefore, I had to rethink the words I used to translate this character. Finally I chose the word Motive as the translation of this character. In the English-English dictionary it means 'a reason for doing something'. There's a sense of the key point and a sense of the starting point. It is also appropriate to bring it back to the context. Therefore, my final translation of this sentence is 'The motive of disaster and good fortune are both from in the moment of beginning in the heart.'

4. Self-Reflection

In this lecture, I tried to translate Chinese classics for the first time. Although I met many problems in the process, I still enjoyed the process very much. Before I started translating this text, I had the same problem as before: difficulty in understanding the original text. In the process of translation, I feel that if you want to complete the translation of the article, you must understand the original text completely. Therefore, my first step after getting the text is to understand the text. The method is to read it over and over again. In this way, I can gradually understand the meaning of the text. After that I will find the difficult characters in Chinese and look them up in the dictionary to try to understand them. Through this process, I can better understand the meaning of each word and then combine it with the original text, so that I can have a general understanding of the whole article. However, the time is limited and I can't understand more deeply, and the understanding of all the texts is still relatively limited. But in the whole process, because I had to constantly think about the accuracy of the words, I had to think about the meaning over and over again, and it always made me feel new meaning and I was very happy.

After I learned and translated this chapter, my biggest feeling was that I should control my mind. In fact, it is to constantly check our heart to see if there is something wrong. Just like what we mentioned above 'People's hearts are not as simple as in ancient times, good and evil are not separated, they are reversed. What did the sages show that was true but was considered strange and weird. They teach people what is good, but this behavior seems strange to others.' We were born in an era where too many bad things have solidified people's perceptions. Therefore, it's possible to inadvertently make a mistake in our daily life that we think is right. Yet now we have no sages who can teach us, only the classics they left behind. Therefore, we need to compare our actions with what is written in the classics. We cannot fully trust our own cognition before we have thorough understanding. Therefore, I

also hope that in my future study and life, I will often reflect on my own problems compared with the classics

5. 5. Bibliography

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