

A Translation of Chapter 58 of the
Daodejing 道德經
and Its Annotation by Shi Deqing



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Original text and translation of chapter 58 of the *Daodejing*

其政悶悶，其民醇醇。其政察察，其民缺缺。

People's minds are pure when the governors do not tell them the intentions of their policies.

People will worry about their lacking of things when the governors state their policies clearly.

Original text and translation of chapter 58 of the *Daodejing*

禍兮福所倚，福兮禍所伏。孰知其極，其無正耶。

Misfortune and blessing go hand in hand and transform into each other.

Don't those who know the truth educate the people of the world?

Original text and translation of chapter 58 of the *Daodejing*

正復為奇，善復為妖。人之迷，其日固久。

However, people regard integrity as weird and the good as a monster.

People have been in rigid confusion for a long time.

Original text and translation of chapter 58 of the *Daodejing*

是以聖人方而不割，廉而不剷，直而不肆，光而不耀。

Therefore, the sages are upright but do not hurt, clean-handed but not too harsh, frank but not presumptuous, brilliant but do not show off.



Original text and translation of Shi Deqing's annotation of
chapter 58– Part A



此詳言上章有為之害，而示之以無為之方也。

This chapter further states the harm of doing things
consciously which is mentioned in the previous chapter,
and demonstrates the practice of letting things take their
own course to the reader.

Original text and translation of Shi Deqing's annotation of
chapter 58– Part A

悶悶，無知貌。所謂民可使由之，不可使知之之意。

‘悶悶’ means the look of ignorance. This is what we
called making people obey the guidance but do not know
the intentions of the governor.

Original text and translation of Shi Deqing's annotation of
chapter 58– Part A

由百姓皆注其耳目，若示有知，即上云法令滋彰，盜賊多有矣。

It is because that people are all focused on seeing and listening.
If they are aware of all things, it will turn to a situation as has
been mentioned above, that the clearer the legal regulations are,
the more thieves there will be.



Original text and translation of Shi Deqing's annotation of
chapter 58– Part A



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。

Therefore, the sages act and use strategies secretly without
letting people know anything.

As a result, people's minds are not insightful and they won't
become treacherous or hypocritical.



Original text and translation of Shi Deqing's annotation of
chapter 58– Part A



故其政悶悶，其民醇醇。

And thus, people's minds will be pure if the governors do not
tell people their intentions of policies.

Original text and translation of Shi Deqing's annotation of
chapter 58– Part A

若其政令察察然分星擘兩，則民多不自安，缺缺然憂有餘矣。

If the governors state their policies clearly, most of the people
will not be at ease and they will have a lot of worries as if they
are lacking of something.



Original text and translation of Shi Deqing's annotation of
chapter 58– Part A



故云其政察察，其民缺缺。缺缺，多憂不足之意。

Therefore it says, ‘其政察察，其民缺缺’. ‘缺缺’ means worrying
about what’s missing.



Original text and translation of Shi Deqing's annotation of
chapter 58– Part B



蓋禍福之機，端在人心之所萌。

Because the key to misfortune and happiness lies in the
activation of people's minds.



Original text and translation of Shi Deqing's annotation of
chapter 58– Part B



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。

If people have good thoughts, then misfortunes turn into
blessings. If people have bad thoughts, then blessings turn into
misfortunes.

Therefore, misfortune and blessing exist and come together.



Original text and translation of Shi Deqing's annotation of
chapter 58– Part B



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。

Because people's thoughts change quickly and never stop,
misfortune and blessing transform into each other like an endless
circle. How can ordinary people know the extreme end of it?



Original text and translation of Shi Deqing's annotation of
chapter 58– Part B



故孔子曰，知機其神乎，謂是故也。

Therefore, Confucius says, it must be God who can know the
key (to misfortune and blessing), and the reason is right here.

Original text and translation of Shi Deqing's annotation of
chapter 58– Part B

然禍福循環之如此，豈無真人而以理正之耶。

However, as misfortune and blessing transform into each other
like this, how can the enlightened people not come to explain the
truth for people and educate them?



Original text and translation of Shi Deqing's annotation of
chapter 58– Part C



但世衰道微，人心不古，邪正不分，善惡顛倒。

Nevertheless, both the world and the Dao are now at a low ebb,
and the social atmosphere has deteriorated.

People do not distinguish between wickedness and righteousness,
and good and bad are reversed.



Original text and translation of Shi Deqing's annotation of
chapter 58– Part C



本示之以正，則彼反以為奇詭。

本教之以善，而彼反以為妖怪。

(The sages) demonstrate the truth to people, but on the contrary,
they are considered peculiar and weird.

(The sages) teach people good things, but on the contrary, they
are regarded as monsters.

Original text and translation of Shi Deqing's annotation of
chapter 58– Part C

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。

As the saying goes, if you try to advise others before they
believe you, it will be considered a malicious attack.

People have been in rigid confusion for a long time, and they
can not be led to correctness even with the teachings of the sages.



Original text and translation of Shi Deqing's annotation of
chapter 58– Part C



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。

Zhuangzi says, three people go together, one is lost, and there is still someone who can point the way. If two of them are confused, their minds cannot be changed. At the moment, all beings across the world are in confusion, who can solve this problem?



Original text and translation of Shi Deqing's annotation of
chapter 58– Part D



是以聖人遊濁世以化民，貴在同塵和光，渾然無跡。

Therefore, the sages walk peacefully in the filthy world to teach people, their preciousness lies in their being together with people commonly and doing the same things as them, which are all with no trace.



Original text and translation of Shi Deqing's annotation of
chapter 58– Part D



故雖方而不傷其割。割，謂割截，乃鋒稜太露也。

Therefore, (the sages are) upright in character but do not hurt
people sharply. ‘割’ means to cut off, which is used to describe a
person with a sharp character.



Original text and translation of Shi Deqing's annotation of
chapter 58– Part D



雖廉而不傷於劇。劇，謂刻削太甚也。

(The sages are) clean-handed but not too mean. ‘劇’ means being too harsh.



Original text and translation of Shi Deqing's annotation of
chapter 58– Part D



雖直而不傷於肆。肆，謂任意無忌也。

雖光而不傷於耀。耀，謂衒耀已見也。

(The sages are) frank but not presumptuous. ‘肆’ means arbitrary and with no inhibition.

(The sages are) brilliant but do not show off. ‘耀’ means to show off one's own opinions.



Original text and translation of Shi Deqing's annotation of
chapter 58– Part D



此聖人有所長，而能養其所長，故為天下貴。

The sages have their strengths, and they can cultivate and
develop them. Therefore, the sages are exalted in the world.



Original text and translation of Shi Deqing's annotation of
chapter 58– Part D



此所以無為而治，好靜而自安，無為而民自化矣。

This is why the sages let things take their own course and then
the world is peaceful.

The sages like quietness and their minds are at ease, without any
intentional behaviour, people themselves are at peace.



Commentary

此詳言上章有為之害，而示之以無為之方也。

This chapter further states the harm of **doing things consciously** which is mentioned in the previous chapter, and demonstrates **the practice of letting things take their own course** to the reader.



Commentary

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。

Zhuangzi says, three people go together, one is lost, and there is still **someone** who can point the way. If two of them are confused, their minds cannot be changed. At the moment, all beings across the world are in confusion, **who** can solve this problem?



Commentary



是以聖人遊濁世以化民，貴在同塵和光，渾然無跡。

Therefore, the sages walk peacefully in the filthy world to teach people, their preciousness lies in their being together with people commonly and doing the same things as them, which **are all with no trace.**



Self-Reflection





Thank you.

