



Undergraduate assignment feedback form

(to be completed by marker)

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<i>Module title:</i> : Sinological English II: Translation of Daoist Literature	
<i>For completion by marker:</i> <i>Comments:</i>	
<i>Marker's signature:</i>	<i>Date:</i>
<i>Provisional mark:</i> NB. All marks are provisional until confirmed by the final examination board.	

Translation

The original text of *Daodejing*:

《道德經》第十三章：「寵辱若驚，貴大患若身。何謂寵辱若驚？寵為下，得之若驚，失之若驚，是謂寵辱若驚。何謂貴大患若身？吾所以有大患者，為吾有身，及吾無身，吾有何患？……」¹

—Master Hanshan 憨山大師《老子道德經解·莊子內篇註》

Three kinds of English translations of this chapter

1

30 Favour and disgrace are things that startle;

High rank* is, like one's body, a source of great trouble.

30a What is meant by saying that favour and disgrace are things that startle? Favour when it is bestowed on a subject serves to startle as much as when it is withdrawn. This is what is meant by saying that favour and disgrace are things that startle. What is meant by saying that high rank is, like one's body, a source of great trouble? The reason I have great trouble is that I have a body. When I no longer have a body, what trouble have I?

31 Hence he who values his body more than dominion over the empire can be entrusted with the empire. He who loves his body more than dominion over the empire can be given the custody of the empire.²

—— Translated by D.C.LAU in 1963

2

Favour and disgrace trouble the mind;

High rank and misfortune befall all mankind.

¹ Master Hanshan 憨山大師註, *Laozi Daodejingjie-Zhuzngzi Neipianzhu* 《老子道德經解·莊子內篇註》 (Tainan: Shetuan Faren Gaoxiongshi Jinzong Xuehui, 2018), p. 58.

² Translated by D.C.LAU, *Lao Tzu Tao Te Ching* (New York: Penguin Books, 1963), p.17.

How do favour and disgrace trouble the mind?
Favour is no blessing:
Winning it unsettles the mind with joy,
Losing it unsettles the mind with sorrow;
Consequently, favour and disgrace trouble the mind.

How do high rank and misfortune befall all mankind?
Misfortune befalls me.
Because I have a body.
If I have no body, how can it befall me?

He who loves his country as he does his own self
Can be entrusted to govern the country;
If he surrenders his body in service to his
country.
How then can he be its entrusted governor?³

—— Translated by Wang Rongpei and Puffenberger in 1996

3

Being favored and being humiliated both should make you feel frightened and panicked. Care for your body like cherishing a disaster.

What is meant by the idea that being favored and being humiliated should both make you feel frightened and panicked? Being favored is still something menial. When people gain favor, they will feel frightened and restless. When they fall out of favor, they will also feel terrified and confused. This is what is meant by the idea that being favored and being humiliated both should make you feel frightened and panic.

What is meant by the idea of caring for your body like cherishing a disaster? The reason why I am greatly worried is precisely because I have a body. If I did not have this body of mine, what worries would I have?

Therefore, a person who can approach the world with the cherishing attitude he displays

³ Translated by Wang Rongpei and William Puffenberger, *Tao Te Ching* (Liaoning: Liaoning University Press, 1996), p. 29-31.

towards himself can be entrusted with the world. A person who can approach the world with the loving attitude he displays towards himself can be entrusted with the world.⁴

—— Translated by Paul J.D'Ambrosio and Xiao Ouyang in 2020

Comparisons and Comments

I have chosen three different translations for this chapter. These three versions were released in year 1963, 1996 and 2020 respectively. I compared these versions in three aspects: layout, rhythmic expression, and contents.

1. Layout

D.C.LAU divided a whole paragraph in the original text into two parts according to the meaning-^{30,31}. In his view, it is possible that some of the chapters of the *Daodejing* do not necessarily belong to the same section originally. He considered that the order should be rearranged. So in his translation he gave his own reordering, as he said:

‘Where two passages are possibly independent, I have given them different section numbers, but when a passage is followed by another which serves as further exposition and was probably added by some editor, I have used the same section number but with an added letter after it.’⁵

I think this is a very novel idea. By labelling and delineating paragraphs with numbers and letters, he can make it easy for readers to know which paragraphs have the same meaning (eg. the paragraphs ³⁰ and ^{30a} have the same subject). Nevertheless, such a layout somehow breaks the respect for the integrity of the original text.

My favourite layout is the second one, which is translated by Wang Rongpei and Puffenberger. This version retains respect for the original layout, but also does not put all the sentences together like a piece of writing, as the third translation (by Paul J.D'Ambrosio and Xiao Ouyang) did.

2. Rhythm

Except for the third version from year 2020, the first two translations rendered the first two sentences of the text with a rhythmic quality. And this way of rhyming can makes the translation interesting and literary.

⁴ Paul J.D'Ambrosio, Xiao Ouyang, *The Annotated Critical Laozi* (Leiden, Brill, 2020), p.112.

⁵ D.C.LAU, *Lao Tzu Tao Te Ching* (New York: Penguin Books,1963), p.14.

3. Content

Let's look at the meaning of the first sentence- 寵辱若驚,貴大患若身. There is a certain correspondence among the six key words in this sentence(寵-辱-驚-貴-大患-身). Therefore, the translation should reflect this correspondence - (寵=辱→驚; 貴=身→大患). However, the third translation ignores this correspondence and even omits a key word - 貴. This sentence has been translated as 'Care for your body like cherishing a disaster.' It is difficult for the reader to see how this relates to the previous sentence- 'Being favored and being humiliated both should make you feel frightened and panicked'. But We can see this kind of connection between the upper and lower sentences in the first two translations(by D.C.LAU and Wang Rongpei & Puffenberger).

The second point I want to compare is the translation of '寵為下'. It means 'Getting favours is not always a good thing', but in D.C.LAU's translation, the meaning of this sentence seems to be ignored. But the other two versions did translated this sentence.

Therefore, my favourite translation among these three version is the second one, which was translated by Wang Rongpei & Puffenberger in year 1996.

My translation

Favour and disgrace both disturb our mind;
Status and body, where disasters we find.

What does 'Favor and disgrace both disturb our mind' mean?
Receiving favor does not imply blessing's embrace.
It brings fear of loss,
As unsettling as disgrace.

What does 'Status and body, where disasters we find' mean?
All the suffering and disasters in the world arises from this body.
If I could release attachment to bodily feelings,
What other disasters would I face?

Reasons for this translation

The target audience of my translation is the general public who would like to know more

about the *Daodejing*. They are not experts or scholars, so I tried to use moderate vocabulary in my translation in order to make it easier for them to understand. Moreover, as the *Daodejing* is also a literary work, and there are many rhymes in its original text, so I have tried my best to give my translation a sense of rhythm. I hope it will be interesting for the readers.

My layout is very similar to Wang Rongpei & Puffenberger, except that my last two paragraphs have four lines each. It is because the last two paragraphs start with a question and then answer it(何謂...?&何謂...?). Therefore, I think that if these two paragraphs are of the same form, then they should have the same layout to maintain uniformity.

As I mentioned in my comments, there should be a correlation between ‘寵辱若驚’ and ‘貴大患若身’ in translation, so I paid attention to this in my translation and tried to have an equal number of words in the first and second lines of my translation (each line has eight words). Then I use the words ‘we’ and ‘our’ to make the reader bring in his or her own feeling.

I have also tried to make the translation of the last two parts more concise and understandable, and avoided using long sentences to make my translation look like an article. I hope it could give readers a beautiful and poetic feeling. That is why I have not repeated the translation of the sentences ‘何謂寵辱若驚’ and ‘是謂寵辱若驚’.