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A Translation of Chapters 59 and 63 of the *Daodejing* 道德經 and their Annotations by Shi Deqing

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1. Original text and translation of chapter 59 of the *Daodejing* 道德經

1.1 Original text

治人、事天、莫若嗇。夫惟嗇，是謂早復。早復，謂之重積德。重積德，則無不克。無不克，則莫知其極。莫知其極，可以有國。有國之母，可以長久。是謂深根固蒂，長生久視之道。¹

1.2 Translation

The best way to manage human affairs and pursue the way of heaven is to be thrifty and cherish. Only when we are thrifty and cherish, can we quickly return to our true nature. To quickly restore your true nature is to accumulate more virtues. If you accumulate more virtues, you can conquer everything. If you can do that, you never know your strength's limit. If the strength is never limit, you can influence a country well. With the fundamental strategy of influencing the country, the rule will last for a long time. This is the truth of deep-rooted and long-term survival.

2. Original text and translation of Shi Deqing's 釋德清 annotation of chapter 59

2.1 Original text – Part A

¹ Hanshan Deqing 憨山德清, Laozi Daodejing Jie 老子道德經解, (Beijing, ZHONG HUA Book Company, 2020) p.121.

此言聖人離欲復性，以為外王內聖之道也。嗇，有而不用之意。老子所言人天，莊子解之甚明。如曰，不以人害天，不以物傷性。蓋人，指物欲。天，指性德也。言治人事天莫若嗇者。然嗇，即復性工夫也。謂聖人在位，貴為天子，富有四海。其子女玉帛，聲色貨利，充盈於前。而聖人以道自守，視之若無，澹然無欲，雖有而不用。²

2.2 Translation of Part A

This means that saints stay away from desire and return to their true nature, that is cultivating themselves with the great Dao, which can be the king's heart from the outside and the sage's virtue from the inside. The character *se* 嗇 means having but not using. Zhuang Zi explained clearly what Laozi said about the relationship between man and nature. For example, it does not damage the way of heaven because of human desire, nor does it damage its own nature because of external things. Here, man refers to material desire and heaven refers to true virtue. The so-called 'The best way to manage human affairs and pursue the way of heaven is to be thrifty and cherish.' But the character *se* 嗇 refers to the time to restore nature. When the sage was being in power, he was as noble as the son of heaven and rich enough to have all the goods in the world, children, money and silk, music, women, goods and wealth. The sage uses the Dao to help himself protect his heart. He regards these as non-being and has no desire. Although he has them, he does not use them.

2.3 Original text – Part B

所謂堯舜有天下而不與，此以嗇治人也。聖人並包四海，智周萬物。不以私智勞慮，而傷其性真。所謂毋搖爾精，毋勞爾形，毋使汝思慮營營。蓋有智而不用其智，

² Hanshan Deqing 憨山德清，Laozi Daodejing Jie 老子道德經解，p.121-122.

此以嗇事天也。復性工夫，莫速於此。故曰是謂之早復。此復字，是復卦不遠復之意。言其速也。又如一日克己復禮，天下歸仁之意。³

2.4 Translation of Part B

Just like Yao and Shun, they have the world, but they will not occupy any property in the world. That is ‘Influencing people with *se* 嗇’. Sages contain all things in the world, and their wisdom is broad enough to know all things. It will not hurt true nature because of selfish care. The so-called not to use your energy, not to strain your body, and not to fall into upset thinking. That is having wisdom but not using, which is called ‘以嗇事天’. There is no faster time to restore own true nature. So Laozi said ‘早復’. This character *fu* 復 means ‘Not far back’ in the diagrams of *fu* 復 in *the Book of Changes*. It means restoring is fast. As the sentence meaning, ‘One day, the deeds and words are done according to the requirements of etiquette, the world will follow humanity.’

2.5 Original text – Part C

莊子曰，賊莫大於德有心。然有心之德施於外，故輕而不厚。復性之功，天德日全，不期復而自復，所謂復見天地之心。故曰早復謂之重積德。能重積德，則無不克矣。此克字，乃克敵之克。即顏子克己之克。以性德日厚，則物欲消融。而所過者化，無物與敵。則其德高明廣大，民無得而稱焉。⁴

2.6 Translation of Part C

Zhuangzi said, the worst is the virtue having heart. A person intends to practice virtue deliberately, which is done in appearance. Thus, he is frivolous rather than thick. The practice for the restoration of real nature will make the virtue in nature more and more sound. If you

³ Hanshan Deqing 憨山德清，Laozi Daodejing Jie 老子道德經解，p.122.

⁴ Hanshan Deqing 憨山德清，Laozi Daodejing Jie 老子道德經解，p.122.

do not expect to restore it deliberately, it will be restored naturally, and will naturally coincide with the heart of heaven and earth. So Laozi said ‘早復謂之重積德’. As long as one can accumulate virtue, nothing can be conquered. This character *ke* 克 means conquer. Namely the 'conquer' is that Yan zi said conquer own self. Because the true virtue is becoming deeper daily, and the material desire naturally disappears. Everything will be turned where he passes, and no external object can be against it. His virtue is noble and broad, so perfect that the people cannot find the appropriate language to praise.

2.7 Original text – Part D

故曰無不克，則莫知其極。極，至極，猶涯量也。此內聖之德既全，雖無心於天下，乃可以託於天下。故曰莫知其極，可以有國。此內聖之道，真以治身，其緒餘以為天下國家。故曰可以有國。此道先天地不為老，後天地不為終。故曰可以長久。古人所言深根固蒂長生久視之道者，如此而已。結句蓋古語。老子引證，以結其意耳。⁵

2.8 Translation of Part D

So Laozi said ‘無不克，則莫知其極’. The character *ji* 極 means edge, it is like a limit. Sage's the virtue of nature is complete. Although he will not deliberately occupy the world, it can entrust the world to him. So Laozi said ‘莫知其極，可以有國。’ The Dao of supreme virtue of sage is truly to cultivate himself, the rest is for the world and the country. So Laozi said ‘可以有國。’. This Dao is before heaven and earth, but it is not old. After heaven and earth, but not the end. So Laozi said ‘可以長久’. That is what ancient people said that the Dao is deep rooted and long-term. The ending sentence is an old saying quoted by Laozi to summarize the meaning of this chapter.

⁵ Hanshan Deqing 憨山德清, Laozi Daodejing Jie 老子道德經解, p.122.

3. Original text and translation of chapter 63 of the *Daodejing* 道德經

3.1 Original text

為無為。事無事。味無味。大，小。多，少。報怨以德。圖難於其易。為大於其細。天下難事，必作於易。天下大事，必作於細。是以聖人終不為大，故能成其大。夫輕諾必寡信。多易必多難。是以聖人猶難之。故終無難。⁶

3.2 Translation

Doing like not doing. Working like not work. Taste like no taste. Big, small. More, less. To render good for evil. To solve difficult things, we must first start with simplicity. To do big things, we must start with small things. All the difficult things in the world begin with simplicity. The major events in the world all start from the subtle. Therefore, the sage never coveted great things, but achieved great things. If one make a commitment to others easily, he will lose other's credit if he cannot do it. If things go too easy, there will be more difficulties later. So sages always think more about difficulties, then there is always no any difficulty.

4. Original text and translation of Shi Deqing's 釋德清 annotation of chapter 63

4.1 Original text – Part A

此言聖人入道之要妙，示人以真切工夫也。凡有為，謂智巧。有事，謂功業。有味，謂功名利欲。此三者，皆世人之所尚。然道本至虛而無為。至靜而無事。至淡而無味。獨聖人以道為懷，去彼取此。故所為者無為。所事者無事。所味者無味。故世人皆以名位為大，以利祿為多而取之。然道至虛微淡泊無物，皆以為小少，故棄而不取。⁷

4.2 Translation of Part A

⁶ Hanshan Deqing 憨山德清， *Laozi Daodejing Jie* 老子道德經解, p.127-128.

⁷ Hanshan Deqing 憨山德清， *Laozi Daodejing Jie* 老子道德經解, p.128.

This chapter is about the wonder and essentials of how sages follow the Dao in practice, teaching people how to truly do it. Generally, having intention means skillful and clever. Having career means merit. Having taste means fame and lust. People are all yearning for these three things. However, the Dao is supreme nothingness and without any intention to do so, is supreme peace and without doing, is supreme light and without taste. The sage just keeps the road, remove those (fame, lust, merit, clever and skills) and take latter these. What he does is without intention, what he does is nothing, and what he wants is no desire. People all over the world think that fame, wealth and status are great, and more money and more wealth are good. But the Dao is supreme nothingness and not to seek fame and wealth, small and few. Ordinary people give it up.

4.3 Original text – Part B

聖人去功與名，釋智遺形，而獨與道遊。是去其大多，而取其小少。故以至小為至大，至少為至多。故大其小，而多其少也。試觀世人報怨以德，則可知矣。何也。且世之人，無論貴賤，事最大而難解者，怨也。然怨之始也，偶因一言之失，一事之差。遂相構結，以至殺身滅名，亡國敗家之禍。甚至有積怨深憤，父子子孫，累世相報而未已者。⁸

4.4 Translation of Part B

Sages leave merit and fame, eliminate cleverness and forget own self, and only choose Dao as a friend, which can be said to leave the majority and choose the minority. Take the smallest as the largest, and the least as the most. It is the opposite of the world to regard small as big and less as much. We can understand by observing the things in the world that repay good for evil. Why? No matter whether people are high position or low position, the most difficult thing is to resolve resentment. Occasionally, because one sentence is wrong and one

⁸ Hanshan Deqing 憨山德清, Laozi Daodejing Jie 老子道德經解, p.128.

thing is not done properly, they form resentment against each other, resulting in the great disaster of killing themselves, destroying the family, and even losing the country and family. Some even have deep grudges, and their children and grandchildren have become enemies for generations.

4.5 Original text – Part C

此舉世古今之恆情也。豈非其事極大且多哉。惟聖人則不然。察其怨之未結也，本不有。始結也，事甚小。既結也，以為無與於己。故無固執不化之心，亦無有我以與物為匹敵。其既往也，事已消之，求其朕而不可得。以此觀之，則任彼之怨，在我了無報之之心矣。然彼且以為有怨，在我全無報復之心，彼必以我為德矣。⁹

4.6 Translation of Part C

This is a common thing in ancient and modern times. Is it not because those things are big and many? The sage is not like this. He can see that resentment having not sprouts, originally having nothing. At first, it was just a small thing. Now that it has happened, he does not think it will have any impact on himself. So he will not have a stubborn state of mind or become an enemy. When things are over, they will disappear naturally. It cannot find any trace of it. From this point of view, even if others have resentment, I have no heart for revenge. Since the other party thinks there is resentment and I have no heart for revenge, he will regard me as virtue.

4.7 Original text – Part D

⁹ Hanshan Deqing 憨山德清, Laozi Daodejing Jie 老子道德經解, p.128.

是所謂報怨以德，非謂曲意將德以報怨也。孔子以直報怨，正謂此耳。斯則怨乃事之至大而多，人人必有難釋者。殊不知有至易者存焉。是所謂為無為，事無事，大其小，而多其少也。天下之事，何獨於怨，而事事皆然。¹⁰

4.8 Translation of Part D

Therefore, not misinterpret the meaning which regard this thing as a virtue to repay other's resentment. That is what Confucius meant by 'Repay resentment directly'. There are so many and big resentment things that everyone will encounter something difficult to solve. People do not know that the most difficult thing has the simplest way. That is to say 'Doing like not doing. Working like not work.' Turn big into small, turn more into less. This is not only resentment, but also other things in the world.

4.9 Original text – Part E

故天下之事至難者，有至易存焉。至大者，有至細存焉。人不見其易與細，而於難處圖之，大處為之，必終無成。苟能圖之於易，而為之於細，鮮不濟者。以天下難事必作於易。天下大事必作於細，故也。作者，始起也。是以聖人虛心體道，退藏於密。跡愈隱而道愈光，澤流終古而與天地參。此所謂終不為大，故能成其大也。¹¹

4.10 Translation of Part E

The most difficult thing has the simplest aspect, and the biggest thing also has the smallest aspect. People do not see the simple and small aspects. They always starts from the difficulties and the big places. So they cannot succeed after all. If people can start from a simple place and act from a small aspect, that will not be no help. Because the difficult things in the world must start from the simple, and the big things must start from the small things. The character *zuo* 作 means beginning from. Sages experience the great Dao with

¹⁰ Hanshan Deqing 憨山德清, Laozi Daodejing Jie 老子道德經解, p.129.

¹¹ Hanshan Deqing 憨山德清, Laozi Daodejing Jie 老子道德經解, p.129.

humility mind, and does not reveal themselves. The more traces are hidden, the great Dao are brighter. Benefit all things and lives forever, coexisting with heaven and earth. The so-called ‘Not be big always, so it can make big.’

4.11 Original text – Part F

老子言及至此，抑恐世人把易字當作容易輕易字看。故誠之曰，夫輕諾必寡信，多易必多難。謂世人不可將事作容易看也。且容易許人，謂之輕諾。凡輕許者，必食言而寡信。見事之容易而輕為者，必有始而無終。是故易字，非容易也。世人之所難，而聖人之所易。世人之所易，而聖人之所難。¹²

4.12 Translation of Part F

When Laozi said this, he was afraid that people would misunderstood and took the character Yi as the easy and relaxed meaning. Therefore, he warned that ‘If a person easily promises others, he will have little credit. How easy it is, how difficult it is to achieve.’ Warn the world not to treat everything as easy. Easy promising others just call *qing nuo* 輕諾. Whoever promises easily will break his promise. People who think things are easy and do them easily are bound to have a beginning and no end. Therefore, the character yi 易 does not mean easy. People thinks it is difficult, but the sage thinks it is easy; People thinks it is easy, but the sage thinks it is difficult.

4.13 Original text – Part G

故曰聖人猶難之，故終無難。猶，應作尤。古字通用。更也。謂世人之所甚易者，而聖人更難之，故終不難耳。觀夫文王兢兢，周公業業，戒慎恐懼乎不睹不聞，皆聖人之所難也。余少誦圖難於易為大於細二語，只把作事看。及餘入山學道，初為極

¹² Hanshan Deqing 憨山德清，Laozi Daodejing Jie 老子道德經解，p.129.

難，苦心不可言。及得用心之訣，則見其甚易。然初之難，即今之易。今之易，即初之難。然治心如此，推之以及天下之事皆然。此聖人示人入道之真切工夫也。志道者勉之。¹³

4.14 Translation of Part G

Therefore, it says sages always think more about difficulties, then there is always no any difficulty. The character *you* 猶 should be *you* 尤. Ancient Chinese characters are interlinked. Change it here. This means that people think it is easy, but saints think it is more difficult, but it is not difficult in the end. For example, the King Wen was cautious and Duke Zhou was conscientious. They warned themselves to be cautious. They were afraid that they would not listen or look. These things are very difficult for sages. When I was young, I read these two sentences, just treating them as ordinary things. When I entered the mountain to learn the Dao, I felt very difficult at first, and I was hard to say my heart. It is very easy to get the knack of heart. The original difficulty is now easy. The present ease is the original difficulty. It can be inferred that everything in the world is like learning the Dao. This is the true practice that saints teach people to enter the Dao. I hope to encourage people with aspirations to learn the Dao.

5. Commentary

I feel that saints are very cautious in speaking and doing things. For example, originally, the character *Lin* and *Se* using together in Chinese to constituent a word, which means that reluctant to use it, and cherish own money too much. But at the beginning is not the meaning here. Only the character *Se* means cherish and saving. The other example is that the word 'having heart 有心' in this sentence '莊子曰，賊莫大於德有心。' is very cautious. Zhuangzi does not use 'intentional', but use 'having heart'. So what is 'having heart'? I looked up this

¹³ Hanshan Deqing 憨山德清，Laozi Daodejing Jie 老子道德經解，p.129-130.

word by online dictionary Handian, which means having some ideas.¹⁴ So that means whether ideas are good or bad, those need not.

6. Reflection

I have many reflections during translation, but it is mainly a deeper study and understanding of the words and actions of saints. The saints have very high requirements for themselves, and they are also very frugal, so that they can always keep themselves on the right path. And they are very cautious in both doing and speaking, so they can avoid many mistakes that most people will make.

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