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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。

1.2 Translation

There is no better way to govern the country and follow mandate of heaven than thrifty. Only being thrift can return¹ to our nature quickly. To return to our nature quickly is to accumulate more virtues. To accumulate more virtues and consequently there is nothing we are unable to do. Nothing is impossible, we will never know the end of our power (revealed from the master of nature). Never knowing the end of our power (revealed from the master of nature), we can govern the country in good order². If we know the Mother of good governance, social stability can last for longer. This is the principle of deep-rooted which will last stability and durable peace.

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

2.1 Original text – Part A

¹ Returning to its natural state even after engaged in human factors, Chen Guying 陳鼓應, *Laozi jinzhu jinyi* 老子今注今譯 [Laozi new annotation and new interpretation], (Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2006), 34

² When the ruler remains good virtues, he will never fail to govern the country. Cheng Lin, *Daodejing-Truth and Nature*, (Taipei: The world Book Company, 2007), 27

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 Translation of Part A

This chapter explains sages let go of greed and restoring their natural instincts. This is the way to cultivate the sage's thoughts deep inside and express by governing the country in good order. The character *se* 嗇 means to have something but not use it. The character *rentian* 人天 (desire and the natural law) said by Laozi was explained clearly by Zhuangzi. For example, don't transgress the natural law into personal greed, or enticing our natural instincts by worldly possessions. The character *ren* 人 refers to material desire, and *tian* 天 refers to the natural law. This is what it means by 'There is no better way to govern the country and follow mandate of heaven than thrifty.' The character *se* 嗇 means the ability of returning our nature. When the sages were on the throne as emperor, they are the richest men in the whole world. They can also live a happy life with a large family and plenty of enjoyment of music, beauty, wealth, profit. But sages stick to the Dao and being self-discipline, they treat those (sensual pleasure or material wealth) as something unreal. Although they have it all, they do not need it or use it.

2.3 Original text – Part B

所謂堯舜有天下而不與，此以嗇治人也。聖人并包四海，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，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。又如一曰克己復禮，天下歸仁之意。

2.4 Translation of Part B

Just like (the great rulers) Yao and Shun, they effect the world but never have the desire to control it. This is what it means by ‘govern the country and follow mandate of heaven than thrifty’. Sages govern the world with the wisdom to solve all problems. Do not hurt our natural instincts by selfish and erroneous thoughts. This is ‘Do not shake your spirit, do not overwork your body, do not get into your frequent and wondering thoughts. For remaining thrifty, sages are wisdom for not using their wisdom (to govern their country). There is no quicker method of returning our nature than this way. Therefore, it says ‘It is the quickest way to return our nature.’ The character *fu* 復 refers to hexagram fu and returning soon. It emphasises the fast speed and further expression is ‘If one day we could conquer our selfish and vicious propensities, all under heaven will show their exclusive faithfulness to our highest morality.’

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。

2.6 Translation of Part C

Zhuangzi said, ‘There is no greater harm than being virtuous with intention.’ Being benevolent with expectation is worldly affairs so it is too light and not profound. The ability of returning our nature will make our virtues more and more complete. We could become virtuous voluntarily without expectation which means to see the noumenon of heaven and earth by returning our nature. This is ‘The method to return our nature quickly is accumulating more virtues’. We will have no obstacles if we accumulate more virtues. The

character *ke* 克 means conquer and further expression is overcome the inner enemy. It is the same character as Yanzi mentioned *keji zhike* 克己之克 (be strict with ourselves). Our material desires begin to melt away when our virtues became more and more complete. We could influence others wherever we pass and no external thing can be our obstacle. Therefore, when our virtue is noble and great, people will naturally praise even they do not have any reward.

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。

2.8 Translation of Part D

Therefore, it says ‘Nothing is impossible, we will never know the end of our power (revealed from the master of nature)’. The character *ji* 極 refers to the ultimate and boundary. It means the virtues of sages become more and more complete. Although they have no intention of governing the world, they can be entrusted with the power of all-under-heaven. This is to say ‘Never knowing the end of our power (revealed from the master of nature), we can govern the country in good order.’ The principle to cultivate the sage’s thoughts deep inside is regulating their conduct by substantial sincerity, and the rest of his sincerity can be used to govern the world. Therefore, it says ‘we can govern the country in good order.’ This principle precedes heaven and earth but cannot be called older one, and it ends after heaven and earth but cannot be called the end. That is why it can be ever-lasting.

What the ancients talks about ‘the principle of deep-rooted which will last stability and durable peace’ just like this. This chapter ends by Laozi quotes the accounts of the ancients to summarize his meaning.

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。

3.2 Translation

Doing things without intention. Treating matters without expectation. Tasting without indulgence. Magnifying the least. Thinking highly of the minimum. Being disentangled from grudge (then others will) know your virtues. To fulfil difficult tasks, we must start with simple places. To carry out the great event, we must start with little steps. We overcome difficult challenge under heaven with the solution of simple problems. We accomplish great occasion under heaven with the detection of tiny problems. Therefore, sages have never been be avid for achieving great events but they could acquire the enormous success.³ People who make promises lightly often lose their credit. People who are more indiscreet and negligent often encounter more difficulties. Hence, sages treat the problem as more difficult (and think over every possible solution) and it turns out to be not difficult.

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

4.1 Original text – Part A

³ Gao Ming, 高明, *xinbian zhuzi jicheng-boshu laozijiaozhu* 新編諸子集成-帛書老子校注[New compilations of Zhuzi-Laozi boshu Notes], (Beijing: Chungwa publishing House, 1996), 134

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。

4.2 Translation of Part A

This chapter explains the wonderful key-point and the true ability of following the Dao.

Whatever we do with intention is merely cleverness and intelligence. Whatever we treat with expectation is merely building up establishment. Whatever we taste with indulgence is merely social status, fame, profit and desires. Ordinary people like us consider these three things to be favoured. However, the noumenon of the Dao is the most void without intention, the most silent without expectation, the most insipid without indulgence. Sages only consider the Dao as the most essential things and give up all worldly affairs. Therefore, they do things without intention. treat matters without expectation and taste without indulgence. Thus, we consider social status and fame as important, profit and wealth as a lot, then compete for them. But the noumenon of the Dao is the most void and subtle which we throw it away as a minor and worthless thing.

4.3 Original text – Part B

聖人去功與名，釋智遺形，而獨與道游。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。

4.4 Translation of Part B

Sages are free from the social status and fame, forget the physical body and let go of all worldly cleverness. They only accompany by the Dao.⁴ They give up something (that ordinary people consider to be) great and important and aim to obtain something (that we consider to be) minor and worthless. Therefore, sages treat the least as the most and the minimum as the maximum. It is ‘Magnifying the least. Thinking highly of the minimum.’ We could know the reason when viewing the world through the attitude of ‘Being disentangled from grudge (then others will) know your virtues. Why? The most difficult obstacle for people both in high social status and low is that we cannot dissolve grudge. However, the cause of grudge may be occasionally saying one wrong sentence or doing one thing improperly. The grudge will be formed between each other. It begins the disaster of losing our lives and fames even destroyed our families and countries. Due to accumulated deep resentments, some revenges seem never end then all of their parents and offspring live under the generational animosity of families.

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。

4.6 Translation of Part C

This is a common phenomenon that is often seen in both ancient and modern times. Is not it because we consider those things to be great and important? Sages do not have this mindset. They can discover the grudge when it had not yet occurred and know originally it did not

⁴ Everyone knows ‘conquering the unyielding with the yielding’ but no one do it. Chen Guying, *op cit.*, 60

exist. When it has begun, they know it just originated in a trifle. When it has occurred, they know it have no effect on them. Hence, they do not want to entangle badly in the issue or treat anything as their enemies. When it has passed, they naturally dissolve and no trace can be found. From this observation, we should not have any intention of vengeance even if others have resentment. Although others consider as resentment, we do not revenge at all, he will definitely will know our virtues.

4.7 Original text – Part D

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。

4.8 Translation of Part D

This is what it means by 'Being disentangled from grudge (then others will) know your virtues.' It does not mean intentionally give kindness to someone that we have been feuding with. This is the same as Confucius said 'Recompense hatred with justice'. Thus, grudge is something the greatest and the most important to us which cannot dissolve easily. Little do we know there is the simplest component within the most ticklish problem. This is 'Doing things without intention. Treating matters without expectation Magnifying the least. Thinking highly of the minimum.' Not only for dissolving resentment, but also for overcoming any problems 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。

4.10 Translation of Part E

Therefore, there is the simplest within the most ticklish problem, the tiniest within the greatest event. We cannot figure out the simplest and the tiniest part and often start work on the most ticklish and the greatest aspects. That is why we always end up with failure. If we can start from simple problems and act from little steps, we will rarely be failed. Consequently, it says ‘We overcome difficult challenge under heaven with the solution of simple problems. We accomplish great occasion under heaven with the detection of tiny problems.’ The character *zuo* 作 refers to stating point. Sages perceive the Dao humbly and yield others without showing the slightest trace. Their signs of action are more insignificant, their Dao will be more glorious. Their virtues moisten everything under heaven. The coexistence between nature and people are ever-lasting. This is ‘sages have never been be avid for achieving great events but they could acquire the enormous success.’

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。故誡之曰，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。

4.12 Translation of Part F

At this point, For fear of the future generations misunderstand the character *yi* 易 as easily or rashly, Laozi warned that ‘People who lightly make promises to others often lose their credit. People who are more indiscreet and negligent often encounter more difficulties.’ He

emphasized that never acting easily or rashly when anything crops up. Making promises lightly is a rash commitment. People who make promises lightly will inevitably break his words and rarely be trusted by others. People who doing things rashly will inevitably begin something without finishing. Therefore, the character *yi* 易 does not refer to easily. Something we consider to be difficult but sages treat it as simple. Something we consider to be simple but sages treat it as 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。及余入山學道，初為極難，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。

4.14 Translation of Part G

Therefore, it says ‘sages treat the problem as more difficult (and think over every possible solution) and it turns out to be not difficult.’ The character *you* 猶 should refer to *you* 尤, one ancient common word which means more. Something ordinary people consider to be simple and sages treat it as more difficult. This is why the problem can be solved finally. For example, King Wen of Zhou and Zhou Gong were conscientious and conscientious for their governance and every initial thought inside, no matter others seen, heard or not. This is all that sages treat as difficult. I (Master Hanshan) read these two sentences ‘To fulfil difficult tasks, we must start with simple places. To carry out the great event, we must start with little steps.’ when I was young, and treated as common words. I had not really thought about it until practised the Dharma in temple. At first, it was really difficult with unspeakable

suffering. After getting the key of practising Buddhist conduct, it became really simple. The initial difficulty is the current easy task. The current easy task is the initial difficulty. Not only for cultivating our mind but for dealing with everything in the world. This is the true ability of following the Dao. I hope to share with those future learners who are willing to practice the Dao.

5. Commentary

During the translation, I found that every annotation has its unique interpretation. To find the rational explanation, I spend time to judge which one is completer and more authentic. First of all, the Daodejing is a very outstanding and far-reaching writing. The words of Laozi are learned from practice but not just talk. Therefore, we should consider which one is more closely related to daily life and benefit readers more for practical application.

For example, the annotation of Master Hanshan and Wangbi are very different in 'We overcome difficult challenge under heaven with the solution of simple problems. We accomplish great occasion under heaven with the detection of tiny problems.'⁵ Wang said 'We should start solving problems when it is not difficult, when things gradually become more difficult we can do nothing.'⁶ Due to ignore the deeper meanings, it is incomplete and disconnected from reality.

We should certainly be aware of solving problems earlier, but in many situations, we need to solve those have already been difficult and huge. At this time, the capacity to find the simple and fundamental problems is very important. Laozi emphasized 'We find the Dao in everything we meet.'⁷ The Dao should be applied to all stages of problem solving, not just in

⁵ Shi Deqing's 釋德清, *Laozi Daodejing jie* 老子道德經解[Annotation of Laozi Dao De Jing], (Beijing: Chungwa publishing House, 2019), 128.

⁶ Chen Guying, *op cit.*, 130-131

⁷ Shi Deqing, *op.cit.*, 19

the early stages. The answer for us to solve the serious problems is 'To accumulate more virtues and consequently there is nothing we are unable to do.'⁸ Therefore, I agree with the Master HanShan's annotation, because 'There is the simplest component within the most ticklish problem.'⁹ We learn the observation analysis in daily life which could help us to find out the urgent problems in complex tasks.

6. Self-Reflection

I used to agree with Wang's annotation that 'the way to dissolve grudge is to give kindness to our enemies'.¹⁰ But I am wronged and not sincere. It is better to cultivate our own virtues, have no complaints and hatred inside as Master HanShan's annotation, 'Being disentangled from grudge (then others will) know your virtues.' Sages have different mindsets with ordinary people like us.¹¹ From the words *quyi* 曲意(intentionally) and *yizhi baoyuan* 以直報怨 (Recompense hatred with justice), sages do not deal with the resentment by the mindset like paying off debts. They do not treat anyone or anything as their enemies at all and practice the Dao without intention. 'Being disentangled from grudge' can be very effective from the happening to the end of resentment. I really want to accompany only by the Dao' in the future.

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⁸ Shi Deqing, *op.cit.*, 121

⁹ Shi Deqing, *op.cit.*, 129

¹⁰ Yu Peilin 余培林, *The new translation of the Laozi*, 新譯老子讀本, (Taipei: San Min Book, 2017), 130

¹¹ Chen Guying, *op.cit.*, 298

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