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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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Date: 28/07 2021

Word count: 1292 English

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。

1.2 Translation

The government decree is not harsh, people will keep pure heart. The government decree is hairsplitting, people will feel worried. Good fortune lies within bad; bad fortune lurks within good. Who knows when it will ultimate end. is not there a sage who uses truth to correct the dislocation. Is there no correction. The correction turn into the strangeness. The good turn into the evil. The confusion of the people has sustained for a long time. Therefore, although the sages deal with things squarely, they will not show their sharpness. Although whitehanded, it is not too harsh. Although honest, it is not presumptuous. Although bright, it is not dazzling.

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 Translation of Part A

This chapter details the disadvantage of actions done with intention of the last chapter and shows the method of actions done with no intention. The phrase 悶悶 refers to the appearance of ignorance. That is what is called can make people abide by the law and policy but can not let them know it. Because people pay attention to their ears and eyes (what they see and hear). If it is shown and let them know, then, the state mentioned above will appear: The more complicated and harsh the law is, the more people are thieves. Therefore, sages act in secret and achieve a subtle effect. They make people unconscious. Popular sentiment do not be dredged, there is no false. Hence, the government decree is not harsh, people will keep pure heart. If the government decree is very hairsplitting, people do not feel at ease most of the time and feel fearful. Therefore, Laozi was said that the government decree is hairsplitting, people will feel worried. The phrase 缺缺 means a lot of worries.

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。

2.4 Translation of Part B

The original cause of misfortune and good fortune is the original thought of people. If the motive is good, misfortune will turn into fortune. If the motive is not good, fortune will turn into misfortune. Fortune and misfortune depend on each other. There is no end to the cycle of misfortune and fortune as a result of people's mind given to deception or trickery

keeping on working, who knows when it will end. So Confucius said that 知機其神乎 the man who knows the original cause is God, which is the cause. However, there is such a cycle of misfortune and fortune, is not there a sage who uses truth to correct the dislocation.

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。

2.6 Translation of Part C

But the morals of the time is decadent, human are not what they were in the times of long ago, there is not distinguish between good and bad, good and bad put upside down. Showing correct idea, instead, they think it is strange. Teaching them good things, instead, they consider it is monsters. It is what is called that instead of listening to persuasion and suggestions, he thought that others were slandering him. People's hearts have been lost for a long time, even with the enlightenment of sages, they can not be corrected. Zhuangzi said that if three people go together and one person loses his way, there are still ways to solve it. If both lose their way, it can not be change. Now people all over the world have lost their way, who can settle it.

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。雖廉而不傷於剝。剝，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。

2.8 Translation of Part D

Therefore, the sage educates people in the world, the most valuable thing is to make themselves same as ordinary people in the world and make all kinds of light blend into one. And they do these without any trace. So although they deal with things squarely, they will not show their sharpness. The character of 割 refers to cutting off. It means that the edges and corners are too exposed. Although whitehanded, it is not too harsh. The character of 剝 means too harsh. Although honest, it is not presumptuous. The character of 肆 refers to action without fear and misgiving. Although bright, it is not dazzling. The character of 耀 means to show off their own opinion. This is that the sages have their own strengths and they are good at cultivating their strengths. Hence, their are estimable and precious in the world. It is governing by doing nothing that goes against nature. liking tranquility, people are naturally at ease. Doing nothing but people are naturally educated and influenced.

3. Commentary

To translate the above content, for those I don't understand from original Chinese text , first of all, I will go online to find out how the word or phrase is interpreted in the Chinese dictionary *Hand Dian*, and study the meaning of the word in the article with reference to the context. Of course, for some content, it depends on reading it several times to understand.

The main problems encountered in the process of translation are my limited level of Chinese and English. Sometimes Chinese is not very understandable and needs to spend a lot of time thinking. And I always can't find the right English words to express it. In addition, there is often a situation that I seems to understand but not understand for some Chinese texts. There is about a feeling, but it is difficult to find an appropriate word in English and translate it into English.

I have benefited from the process of translation, because I must study the meaning of each sentence and learn from the wisdom of the sage. Especially, the annotation of master Han Shan. Personally, I believe that master Han Shan has a deep understanding of the *Daode Jing*. For example, The original cause of misfortune and good fortune is the original thought of people 蓋禍福之機，端在人心之所萌. Which speak to key point.

4. Self-Reflection

Lao Tzu said that the government decree is not harsh, people will keep pure heart etc. I consider the government decree is the cause and its impact is the result. Why is it that the government decree is hairsplitting, people will feel worried. I think the most fundamental problem should be attributed to

heart. To formulate strict and hairsplitting policies, in fact, we already have the mind given to deception or trickery 機心 mentioned in master Han Shan's annotation. Because the leaders have the heart, the people will have this mentality, and then there will be a vicious circle. Vice versa. This is also the principle of people follow the example of their superiors.

Lao Tzu said that although the sages deal with things squarely, they will not show their sharpness etc. I think this is the golden mean. It's hard for ordinary people to do that. For example, sages can be able to bright but not dazzling. It is easy for us to favor one extreme, either inferiority or pride. These emotions often appear in our lives. When I deal with things very well, or my calligraphy is better than others, I will have a sense of superiority and I unconsciously want to show off. However, sages know their strengths but will not show off. In this way, they will not hurt others or attract people's jealousy. They can live in harmony with everyone.