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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

Nothing is more important to the control of material desires and the cultivation of virtue than the restoration of self-nature. There is no faster way than this. The early restoration of self-nature is to continue to do good things. Keep doing good deeds, there is nothing that cannot be overcome. If there is nothing that cannot be overcome, then the power is immeasurable. With this incalculable power, one can shoulder the important task of governing the country. With the principles and theories of governing a country, it can be sustained for a long time. This is what the ancients said has a deep foundation, not easy to change, in line with the long-term way.

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

2.1 Original text – Part A

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。調聖人在位，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 describes the sages keep away from their desires and return to their nature, which they see as a way of governing the country outwards and promoting morality inward. The character *se* 嗇 means to have but not use. Zhuangzi explained very clearly what Laozi said about man and heaven. As the sages say, 'Don't damage your original morality and ability because of material desire, don't let external things hurt your original self-nature.' The character *ren* 人 means material desire, the character *tian* 天 means original morality and ability. What Lao zi said in the original is 'Nothing is more important to the control of material desires and the cultivation of virtue than the restoration of self-nature'. However, *se* 嗇 means a state of restoration of self-nature. In the position of the emperor, the sages were distinguished and owned the people and property, music, women, goods and wealth of the whole world. It's all very easy for them to get. However, the sages use the Dao to restrain themselves and treat fame and wealth as something that does not exist and does not have desires. Although they owned them, they did 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。又如一日克己復禮，天下歸仁之意。

2.4 Translation of Part B

Yao and Shun owned the world, but did not take it for their own personal gain, This is to use *se* 嗇 to govern the people. The sages are broad-minded that can tolerant the whole world of people, their wisdom is unfathomable which can consider all aspects of everything faultlessly. They do not compromise the true self-nature by the intellectual and mental effort required to deal with mundane matters. As the sage said, ‘Do not overwork your body, do not allow your spirit to vacillate easily, do not allow yourself to overthink.’ Sages have intelligence but do not use it, and this is a way of using *se* 嗇 to cultivate original morality and ability. There is no faster way to return to the original self-nature. Therefore, Lao zi says, ‘There is no faster way than this.’ The character *fu* 復 means to correct the perceived mistakes and return to the right path (an images of the trigrams in *Zhouyi*). This is telling it fast. As Confucius said, ‘If there is a day to overcome one’s delusion, lust, evil thoughts, deviant ideas, to maintain the state of sincere respect for all things, can achieve the real state of the universe and the body and mind become one entity.’

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 that the most damaging thing to morality is the deliberate cultivation of morality in the pursuit of greater rewards. However, showing others that you have done good in order to get good rewards is not true goodness. The effort to restore self-nature grows daily, not expecting an early recovery will restore

naturally. As *zhou yi* said that the function of the world to produce all things is manifested in the visible and visible process of mass transformation, that is, the nature itself. Therefore, Lao zi says, ‘The early restoration of self is to continue to do good things. Keep doing good deeds, there is nothing that cannot be overcome.’ The character *ke* 克 means to overcome the enemy and also means to control one's desire. As the virtue of self-nature increases, then our desire for material things will fade away. Where they pass, people would change by their education and persuasion. Nothing can match them. People don't know how to praise them because of their profound virtues.

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, Lao zi said, ‘If there is nothing that cannot be overcome, then the power is immeasurable.’ The character *ji* 極 which means the state of perfection, is still limited. The inner virtue of the sages has been completely perfect, although they did not want to rule the world, but can entrust the world to them. Therefore, Lao zi said, ‘With this incalculable power, one can shoulder the important task of governing the country.’ The essence of the sage's inner practice lies in self-cultivation, and the rest is for the sake of the world. Therefore, it says, ‘one can shoulder the important task of governing the country.’ This Dao arise before heaven and earth would not

decline, arise after heaven and earth would not end. Therefore, it says, ‘it can be sustained for a long time.’ What the ancients said, ‘Has a deep foundation, not easy to change, in line with the long-term way.’ That’s what it means. The last sentence of this chapter is an old saying, which Lao zi used to confirm the meaning of the article and to conclude the chapter.

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

The sages do not use wisdom and skill in dealing with things. they do not think it is achievement when doing things for the common people. They have no utilitarian thoughts in their minds. Sages think the smallest is the biggest, and the fewest is the most. Sages use their own good character and deeds, to deal with others bad to them. Dealing with difficult problems from the simple place, achieving the great ideal from the small place. The difficult things in the world must start from a simple place. The great affairs of the world must start from a small part. Therefore, the sages who have Dao does not always pursue great contributions, so they can achieve great things. Those who promise others easily will have no credit. Those who regard things too easily will suffer a lot of difficulties. Therefore, the sage who have Dao always values difficulties, so there is no difficulty at last.

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。

4.2 Translation of Part A

This chapter tells the main points and the beauty of the sage's entering the Dao, shows the common people the true practice. The term *youwei* 有為 means intelligence and skill. The term *youshi* 有事 means exploits. The term *youwei* 有味 means fame and wealth. All three are what ordinary people seek. However, the Dao itself is intangible without intention, so pure that it has no intention of creating anything, very light and does not contain fame and wealth. Only the sage regards the Dao as the root. Therefore, they do not use intelligence and skills in governing the country. They do not have the idea of making achievements and competing for fame and fortune in their minds, removes the polluted to obtain the pure. People in the world think that fame and wealth are important, so they keep pursuing what they think they can get a lot of benefits. However, the Dao itself is intangible and does not contain material desires. People all believe that learning the Dao can get very limited, so they give it up.

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

The sage gave up fame and wealth, broke free from worldly limitations, and stood aloof from worldly strife, are associated only with the Dao. Therefore, they got rid of the one that ordinary people thought was more profitable and took the one that ordinary people thought was less profitable. Therefore, the sages think the smallest is the biggest, and the fewest is the most. If we try to observe, we can see that sages use their own good character and deeds, to deal with others bad to them. Therefore, we know why they do like this. For ordinary people, no matter noble or humble, the most difficult to resolve is hatred. However, at the beginning of the resentment, just because a word is wrong, a thing did not do well. Gradually, the entanglement deepens to the point that it leads to murder, slander, the destruction of a family and even the destruction of the country. Because the hatred is very deep, father and son revenge one after another, even after each generation to revenge are endless.

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 ordinary state of the whole world since ancient times. Isn't this a big deal and a lot of things? The sages, however, did not think so. They observed this before

the resentment was formed, there would be no enmity. It was also a small matter in the early stages of enmity. When enmity was formed, the sages believed that nothing had been done go against them. Therefore, they don't have stubborn and unforgiving minds, they also have no hostile hearts. Time has passed and things have gone, and it is impossible even to find signs of resentment. To look at it this way, even if there had been an enmity between the two sides, as for sages, there would have been no desire for revenge. However, the other side believes that there was an enmity between the two sides, but if the saint has no intention of revenge at all, the other side will certainly think that this is a virtuous person.

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 to use their own good character and deeds, to deal with others bad to them, rather than misinterpret the meaning as a virtue to repay resentment. Confucius said that to deal with the evil deeds of others with integrity. That's what it means. There are too many grievances, some of which are very deep, everyone has something hard to let go of. What they don't know, though, is that there are some enmity things that are easiest to let go of. That's what the original text says, 'The sages do not use wisdom and skill in dealing with things. they do not think it is achievement when doing things for the common people. They have no utilitarian thoughts in their minds. People regard the biggest as the smallest, and the most as the least.' Of all the things in the world, not only resentment is like this, everything is like this.

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 are the most difficult things in the world, and there are correspondingly the simplest things. In the same way, where there is the grandest enterprise, there are correspondingly the smallest things. If people do not pay attention to the simplest and smallest things, just work hard on the most difficult and big things, they will not succeed in the end. If people can start with simple, small things, very few of them will fail. That's what original text says, 'The difficult things in the world must start from a simple place. The great affairs of the world must start from a small part.' The character *zuo* 作 means start. Therefore, the sage humbly realized the true meaning of the Dao, retreated and hid in a secret place, not to reveal their trace. However, the more they hid their tracks, the brighter the Dao shone, their virtue is immortal, and lives with heaven and earth. That's what original text says, 'The sages who have Dao does not always pursue great contributions, so they can achieve great things.'

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。

4.12 Translation of Part F

When Lao tzu said up here, he fear people in the world understand *yi* 易 as easy. Therefore, Laozi warned descendants, ‘Those who promise others easily will have no credit. Those who regard things too easily will suffer a lot of difficulties.’ Lao zi told people in the world not to see things as easy. Moreover ,if it is easy to make a promise to others , this is called *qingnuo* 輕諾. Those who promise others easily will inevitably go back on their word and have no credit Those who do what they think is easy will not stick to the end. Therefore this character *yi* 易 not means easy. What the people in the world considers difficult is simple for the sages, what the people in the world finds simple is difficult for the sages.

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, ‘The sage who have Dao always values difficulties, so there is no difficulty at last.’ *You* 猶 should be *you* 尤. Ancient characters are also used today. It means more. What the people in the world thinks is very simple, the sages find more difficult, therefore, ‘So there is no difficulty at last.’ We observe the king of wen, Zhou gong is careful, diligent, serious and responsible, usually very careful, for the things that will disturb the body and mind do not see nor listen to. This is what

the sages found difficult. When I was young, I read the two sentences *tu nan yu yi* 圖難於易 and *wei da yu xi* 為大於細 and I only thought of them as things. When I entered the mountains to learn Dao, it was very difficult at the beginning, I could not express my distress in words. When I got the gist of learning, I found it very simple. However, what I thought was very difficult at the beginning is very simple now. What I think is simple today looks very difficult at the beginning. This is the principle of spiritual practice, and it applies to all things in the world. This is the sages for ordinary people to show the true state of learning morality, people who are interested in the Dao should be encouraged.

5. Commentary

When I translated the content of chapter 63, I referred to Wang Bi's notes¹. As for the second sentence, his explanation is that small enmity is not worth revenge, big enmity is the people all over the world want to wipe out. However, the difference between sages and ordinary people in the original text is that sages and ordinary people have different perspectives on problems, so they have different attitudes towards problems. Wang Bi's annotation is not considered from this point, so it does not accord with the original meaning. Finally, I chose the annotation of Shi Deqing.

The central idea of Laozi is *wuwei* 無為. Since modern times, many scholars have also carried out research on this idea, they think that *wu wei er zhi* 無為而治 means that constantly know the essence of things, grasp the law of things.² A ruler

¹ Translated by myself, Yu Peilin, *A New Translation of the Daodejing* (Taipei: Sanmin Publishing House Press, 2017) p.130

² Wang Xiuhuan, 'There is 'Dawei' in "Wuwei" -- A New Understanding of Laozi's "Wuwei" Thought', *Legality Vision*. 02(2020), pp.234-236

should govern in a natural way.³ I agree with this saying that the sage will govern the country and the people in accordance with the Dao of heaven and earth, which is the highest state of governance.

6. Reflection

I was inspired by chapter 63, that if someone want to do something great, he has to start with something simple and small. If he focuses only on the hard things and ignore the simple things, he will not succeed in the end. In the future in the process of learning, I will continue to remind myself to work hard from small points, do not ignore any detail, carefully do every little thing, remember the teachings of the sages.

7. Bibliography

7.1 Book:

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7.2 Journal Articles:

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2. Lu Yulin, 'The *Daodejing* Contains Four Enlightenment of Self-Cultivation and Governance', *People's Tribune*. 33(2019), pp.129-131

³ Lu Yulin, 'The *Daodejing* Contains Four Enlightenment of Self-Cultivation and Governance', *People's Tribune*. 33(2019), pp.129-131