

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

It is better to rule people and follow the way of nature with *se* 嗇. Only with *se* 嗇, can people's nature get back early. The word *zaofu* 早復 refers to attaching great importance to the accumulation of virtue. If people can heavily accumulate virtue, there is nothing incapable. If there is nothing incapable, then its boundary will be immeasurable. If their boundary are immeasurable, they can govern countries. Having a fundamental strategy for governing the country, then it can be everlasting. That is the ingrained and everlasting Dao.

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。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 speak of that sages stay away from desires and returns to nature. Taking this as the way of sageliness within and kingliness without. The word *se* 嗇 means that having but do not use it. The relationship between people and the the natural laws Laozi mentioned, Zhuangzi explained it very clearly. For instance, it is said that do not harm the natural laws because of human desire. Do not harm nature due to external things. The word *ren* 人 refers to material desires. The word *tian* 天 refers to nature. This speak of that it is better to rule people and follow the way of nature with *se* 嗇. But the word *se* 嗇 refers to the practice of backing to nature. This means that when sages is on the throne, they are honorable and wealthy even to be the emperor and possess the whole country. Their life is filled with material enjoyment such as children, music, beauty, goods and money. But sages restrain themselves with the Dao, so they treat those material enjoyment as nothingness and cease to desire. They do not use, though they possess 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。又如一日克己復禮，天下歸仁之意。

2.4 Translation of Part B

This is that Yao and Shun possess the whole world but they do not selfishly keep it for themselves, that is ruling people with *se* 嗇. Sages possess the whole world and wisdom to

deal with everything. They will not harm their nature because of selfish thoughts. It is that do not shake your spirit, do not overstrain your body and do not make yourself think too much. Therefore, to have wisdom but not use it, that is to follow the way of nature with *se* 嗇. This is the fastest way to have the practice of backing to nature. Thus it is said that is *zaofu* 早復 (backing to nature faster) This meaning of the word *fu* 復 in the Chinese divinatory symbol *fu* 復 is getting back to the right track if you do not go so far. This speak of that it is fast. It is also the meaning of that to restrain yourself and do everything according to the requirements of etiquette. Once this is done, the world will tend to be benevolent.

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 nothing is more harmful than a desire to be virtuous with a strong sense of purpose. However, if the moral integrity is displayed outside with a strong sense of purpose, it will be light-minded but do not have a great sense. With the practice of backing to nature, the natural instincts increasingly sound. It is not expected to back to nature, but it regain naturally. The so-called to see the nature of heaven and earth. Therefore, it is said that *zaofu* 早復 refers to attaching great importance to the accumulation of virtue. If people can heavily accumulate virtue, there is nothing incapable. This word *ke* 克 means defeat the enemy, for Yanzi it is also the meaning of restraining one's desire. Because people's virtue from the true nature are getting deeper and deeper, the material desire will be decreasing.

Then, everything around them will be influenced, Nothing can be hostile to them. Then, their virtue are such noble and vast, people even do not know how to praise them.

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 is said that its boundary is immeasurable, hence they can govern countries. This is the way of sageliness within, their true nature can cultivate their own moral character, The rest can be used to govern the world and countries. Thus, it is said that they can govern countries. This Dao generated before the heaven and earth but not to be old, after the heaven and earth but not to be the end. Therefore, it is said that it can be everlasting. That is the ingrained and everlasting Dao the ancients preached. That is all. The epilogue is the old saying quoted by Lao Tzu, which is use 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

What sages did is doing nothing and they are in the business of doing nothing. The taste they want to taste is no taste. They treat the small as big, and the tiny as more and return good for evil. Solving the difficult problems should start with the easy part, the great things must start from the small part. The difficult things must start with easy part. Great undertakings have small beginnings. Sages never want to make great achievements, but ultimately achieve it. A person quick to promise must lack credibility, thinking things too simple, there must be a lot of difficulties in doing it. Sages always think more about the difficulties when doing things, thus in the end there are no difficulties for them.

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 speak of the wander of sages getting into the Dao and shows people the real practice. Everything that makes a difference is brains and tact. Anything that has something to do is to make achievements. Everything with flavor refers to the desire for fame and gain. These three things are chased and admired by the people all over the world. But the Tao is inherently nonexistent and does nothing, quiet and have not anything and light and have no taste. Sages just stick to the Tao, they discard those and take up these. Therefore, what he did is doing nothing. He is in the business of doing nothing. The taste he wants to taste is no taste. Therefore, everyone in the world believes that fame and status, benefits, and money are the

most important, and they are vying for it. But the Tao is nonexistent, people think it is small and few, thus they discard it and do not take 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

Sages discard the contribution and fame. They detach from knowledge and ignore their body, but only stick to the Dao. They are giving up something big and much, but choosing something small and few. Therefore, they take the smallest thing as the largest and the least as the most. Thus they treat the small as big, and the tiny as more. With the observation of the phenomenon of returning good for evil in the world, something can be known. Why so? Besides, for people in this world, no matter how rich or poor, the most serious and intractable thing is resentment. However, the beginning of resentment is result from accidentally saying a wrong word and doing a wrong thing. Therefore, people forged grudges against each other, so that they suffer from killing even the country is defeated and the home lost. Some people even have a deep grudge, and generations of descendants avenge each other endlessly.

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 constant situation in ancient and modern times. Isn't it because people think things are too big and too many. Only sages are not like this. They observe the grudge when it is not yet arose and find it is originally not exist. When at the beginning of having a grudge, The situation is still minor. When the enemy has been made, they also think that it will not bring any impact on themselves. So they do not have a stubborn mentality and will not be hostile to others. The matter is over, it will disappear naturally, even cannot find a trace of it. From this point of view, even if others have grievances, but I have no intention of revenge. However, other people think that there is still resentment, and I have no intention of revenge at all, then the others will think that I am good for evil.

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

The so-called returning good for evil not refers to deliberately doing like this. Confucius said that to requite grudge with fairness and honesty. That's what it means. The matters of grudge are so big and more. Everyone has problems that are difficult to solve. They do not know there is a simple way. It is doing things with the sense of doing nothing, being in the business of doing nothing, taking the smallest thing as the largest and the least as the most. All things around the world, it is not just about resentment one thing. It is about everything else which are 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, the hardest things in the world have its easiest aspects and the biggest things also have its smallest aspects. People do not notice the simplicity and the smallness, but always start with the most difficult and do the biggest things, so they would not succeed after all. If they can start with the simplest and do the smallest things, then they are rarely unsuccessful. This is why that the difficult things must start with easy ones. Great undertakings have small beginnings. The word *zuo* 作 means starting. Thus, sages just let their minds go and comprehend the Dao, they hide their light under a bushel. The more hidden the trace, the more the Dao's light shines. Their blessings are lasting forever and coexist with heaven and earth. This so-called, sages never want to make great achievements, but ultimately achieve it.

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

Lao Tzu said to this point, he afraid that people misunderstand the meaning of this word yi 易 as 'easy'. Thus, he warned that a person quick to promise must lack credibility, thinking things too simple, there must be a lot of difficulties in doing it. He warn people not to treat things as too easy when they encounter. Making promises too easily is called *qingnuo* 轻诺. Those who make promises easily always break their promises and have little faith. People who often think it is easy when they meet things and act rashly in case of trouble always have a beginning but no end when they do something. Therefore, the word *Yi* 易 does not mean 'easy'. Sages think of the difficulties to ordinary people as easy things to themselves. Ordinary people think of the difficulties to sages as easy things to themselves.

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 is said that sages always think more about the difficulties when doing things, thus in the end there are no difficulties for them. The word *you* 犹 should be another word *you* 尤. Ancient characters are in common. Corrected now. It means something that people think is easy, but sages think it is more difficult and in the end it is not difficult for them. For example, King Wen and The Duke of Zhou were conscientious and always be vigilant and cautious where people can't see them, and be afraid of making mistakes where people can't hear them. These are things that sages think are difficult. When I was young and I read the

sentence ‘ solving the difficult problems should start with the easy part, the great things must start from the small part ’ I just regard it is normal things. When I enter the mountain to learn the Tao, it was very hard at first and the anguish in my mind is indescribable. When I get the trick, then I found it is very easy. But the difficulty at the beginning is the easy now, and the easy now is the difficulty at the beginning. The cultivation of the mind is like this, everything in the world is all like this. This is a real practice that sages show people how to practice with the Dao. People who are interested in the Dao should motivate each other.

5. Commentary

My translation method is divided into 4 steps. The first is to understand the real meaning of the original text. The second is to translate classical Chinese text into modern Chinese. The third is to search for the corresponding English words and compare multiple synonyms to judge which one can more accurately express the meaning of the original text. The last is to connect the these words into smooth sentences, and reconfirm that the translated sentences are consistent with my understanding of the meaning in the original text. I have used some dictionaries both in Chinese and English to help me translate more accurately which have helped me a lot in the process of translation.

6. Reflection

I have some thoughts about this sentence ‘ Sages think of the difficulties to ordinary people as easy things to themselves. Ordinary people think of the difficulties to sages as easy things to themselves. ’ Because the most difficult and important things for sages are the cautious observation of their pure mind and the responsible attitude of mind cultivation. That is what sages think need to be treated with caution. But for ordinary people, the biggest and most difficult things are the gain and loss of wealth, fame and beauty. From my perspective,

it can be seen from this that sages and ordinary people are working in two completely different directions, that is why two completely different results of their lives are created. To summarize, I believe that the direction of one's efforts can determine the success or failure of a person.