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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

It is must be *se* (that owning everything but do not attach to it) can put an end to the worldly desires and restore to the self-nature of heaven. Merely *se* can restore to the self-nature quickly. The effective way to restore to the self-nature is paying attention to do good things. As long as someone favours to do good things, there is nothing he cannot overcome. Because he can get over everything, we do not known the utmost of his ability. For there is no limit of his ability, he can govern the country. Because of having the root method to govern the country, the country will enjoy an enduring governance. This is so called the deeply rooted and ever-lasting 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 explains that sages stay away from the desires and restore to the self-nature, to regard as the Dao of being national leader outwardly and sages inwardly. The character *se* 嗇 means that they own everything but do not attach to it. What Laozi says about the *ren* 人(people) and the *tian* 天(heaven) which is fully explained by Zhuangzi. For example, Zhuangzi says ‘do not break the Dao of heaven for worldly desires and do not harm the self-nature for the worldly things’. The character *ren* refers to worldly desires and the character *tian* refers to the self-nature. This is what is called ‘It is must be *se* (that owning everything but do not attach to it) can put an end to the worldly desires and restore to the self-nature of heaven’, and the character *se* is the ability to restore to the self-nature. It means that when sages are in power, as national leaders they are honourable and rich in the world. They are well provided with children, jades, silks, music, beauty, goods and profit. However, they just keep their duty with Dao, regarding the worldly things as non-existence. They have no desires and their mind are at rest, and they are not attached to anything although they own.

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 so called that Yao and Shun own everything under heaven but do not have the desires to control them, which is ‘put an end to the worldly desires with *se*’. Besides, sages’ mind are considerate which can encompass the whole world, and their wisdom are great which can include all things. They do not hurt their sincerity for personal desires. This is what it means that ‘do not overuse your vitality, do not exhaust your body, and do not be caught up in the racing thoughts’. Sages are able to let it go of their wandering thoughts although they are wise enough, which is ‘restore to the self-nature of heaven with *se*’. This is the fastest way to restore the ability of self-nature, therefore says ‘restore to the self-nature quickly’. The character *fu* 復 means ‘go ahead for a short time and turn back quickly’ in the hexagram Fu, which explains the speed of it. For example, it also have the same meaning from *The Analects of Confucius*, ‘restrict oneself and restore to the propriety for one day, then all the people would come back to 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。

2.6 Translation of Part C

Zhuangzi said that ‘the biggest mistake is to do virtuous things with expectation ’. Because people do good things with intention outwardly, naturally the value is low and it is not worth. However, with the ability to restore to the self-nature, the self-nature of heaven would be increasingly improved. Although we do not expect to restore but naturally done, which is so called sages coincide with the self-nature of

heaven and earth. Therefore says ‘The effective way to restore to the self-nature is paying attention to do good things’. As long as someone favours to do good things, there is nothing he cannot overcome. The character *ke* 克 means ‘defeat the enemy’, which also means to restrict oneself as what Yanhui did. Because the self-nature gradually restores and the worldly desires naturally perish. All things are influenced wherever sages pass through, and there is nothing can be obstacles for them. Thus their virtue is noble and great, the people desire for no gain and naturally respect and 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 says ‘Because he can get over everything, we do not known the utmost of his ability’. The character *ji* 極 have the meaning of the utmost, and it also means limit. Since it is sufficient of the virtue of being sages inwardly, they can be entrusted with the power of all-under-heaven although they do not have the intention to own the world. Therefore, says ‘for there is no limit of his ability, he can govern the country’. This is the Dao of being sage inwardly. The self-nature can cultivate themselves and then the rest can govern the country and the world. Therefore says ‘he can govern the country’. The great Dao cannot called old ahead of the heaven and earth, and cannot named end after the heaven and earth. Therefore says ‘the

country will enjoy an enduring governance’. This is what ancestors said the deeply rooted and enduring Dao, that's all. The last sentence is an ancient word that is Laozi’s citations in order to merely conclude the meaning of the article.

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 actions done with intention is something without intention. What affairs done with expectation is something without expectation. What things done with desires is something without desires. The large is small and the numerous is little. To return virtue for hatred. Begin from the way of the easy and to do from the aspect of the small. All difficult things under heaven begin from the easiest, and all major events in the world start from the smallest. Therefore, sages eventually not do great things, but can achieve their great. If someone makes promise too lightly, he would be less reliable. If someone consider everything to be too easy, the things would be more difficult. Therefore, sages consider something to be extremely difficult, eventually it is not difficult.

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 explains the great wonder of how sages follow the Dao in practice, showing people the true state of it. Whatever actions done with intention refers to clever and cunning. Whatever affairs done with expectation refers to achieving merits. Whatever things done with desires refers to fame, profit, social status and sensual pleasure. These three are what ordinary people favour. However, essentially the Dao is extremely empty without intention, extremely silent without expectation, and extremely unaware without desires. Solely sages pay attention to the Dao, taking it and discarding intention, expectation and desires. Therefore says what they done with intention is something without intention, that of expectation is something without expectation, and that of desires is nothing desirable. Thus ordinary people pursue fame and profit, because they regard fame and profit as large and numerous. However, the utmost empty Dao is nothing desirable like non-existence, people consider it to be small and little and hence discard it.

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。遂相搆結，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 profit and fame, leave the knowledge and body, merely accompany with the great Dao. This is to say that they discard what is large and numerous but favour what is small and little. Therefore they regard extremely small as extremely large, and consider extremely little to be extremely numerous. Consequently, the large is small and the numerous is little. You can understand it by observing ordinary people to return virtue for hatred. Why? Because for the ordinary people no matter how noble and lowly they are, the hardest problem that cannot be solved is the hatred. However, the origin of the hatred is only a mistake of one word or one thing by accident. Then it can cause hatred between each other, and even lead to great disasters of being killed, destroying the body, losing the country and ruining the family. What is more, if the hatred developed deeper, it would cause revenge generations after generations and could not stop.

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

Ever since the beginning of time, this is the constant condition across the world. Aren’t these things very big and so many? However, sages are not like that. They

observe that originally the hatred is non-existence before it being incurred, and they consider it as a minor matter when the hatred begins. Besides, they regard that it does not have any influence on them after the hatred having be caused. Thus they do not have the thoughts of attachment and there is nothing can be obstacles for them. Since the hatred has passed, the matters also disappear with it. Even we cannot find the signs of it. Viewing from this perspective, no matter how people incur hatred, I totally do not have any thoughts of revenge. Then even they still consider that there exits the hatred, but I completely do not have any desires for revenge. Consequently, they would regard me as 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 what it means by to return virtue for hatred. It is not as simple as literal meaning that if someone treat us with hatred, we should return to him the virtue. But as what Confucius said that ‘being virtuous to people like nothing happens even they have hatred to us’. Thus, the hatred is something very large and numerous. Everyone must have difficulties that they cannot solve, little do they know that there exists the easiest way. This is what actions done with intention is something without intention, what affairs done with expectation is something without expectation. The large is small and the numerous is little. All things under heaven are like that not only the hatred.

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 exist the easiest in the most difficult things under heaven, also there has the smallest in the largest things. People do not observe the way of the easy and the small, but begin from the aspect of the difficult and the large, eventually resulting in vain. If they can begin from the way of the easy and to do from the aspect of the small, which is only very few failed. Therefore says ‘all difficult things under heaven begin from the easiest, and all major events in the world start from the smallest’. The character *zuo* 作 means begin. Sages are modestly follow the Dao in practice and hide their light silently without expectation. However, the more secret their signs of actions are, the more bright their light of Dao own. They naturally influent the people under heaven and their virtue is ever-lasting to the end, and they can coexist with the heaven and earth. This is what it means by 'they eventually do not do great things, but can achieve their great’.

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

Laozi says to this stage, for fear that ordinary people regard the character *yi* 易 as the meaning of easy. Hence he warns people that ‘if someone makes promise too lightly, he would be less reliable. If someone consider everything to be too easy, the things would be more difficult’. In order to tell the people that do not regard things as easy one. What is more, what called *qingnuo* 輕諾 is making promise too lightly. Whoever makes promise too lightly surely break his promise and fail to live up to his words. Whoever regards things as easy one and to do rashly, which would be certainly no end even it starts. Therefore, the character *yi* not means easy. What are considered to be difficult by ordinary people is the easy for sages, and what are considered to be easy is the difficult for 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 says ‘Sages consider something to be extremely difficult, eventually it is not difficult’. The character *you* 猶 should be *you* 尤, both of them are in common use in ancient times and it means ‘especially’. Ordinary people regard something as especially easy, but sages consider them to be even more difficult, hence eventually they are not difficult. For example, if we view that King Wen of Zhou and Zhou Gong do everything with great fear and caution(for fear of being spread rumors).

They are vigilant, prudent and afraid like see and hear nothing, which is all what sages regard as difficult. When I (Shi Deqing) was young and read the sentences of 'begin from the way of the easy and to do from the aspect of the small'. I merely consider it to be simple, until I started to learn the Dao after getting into the mountain. At first, it is extremely difficult for me, and the hardship even beyond words. Then when I understood the secret of how to practice mind, I could see the extremely easy way of it. However, what is difficult originally is what is easy today, and what is easy today is what is difficult originally. Actually, cultivating mind is something like that. If we can promote it to all things under heaven, then all things are like that. This is what sages show people the truth state of how to follow the Dao in practice. Who aspires to follow the great Dao should be determined together.

5. Commentary

When I do my translation, I am cautious about the translation of the sentence *zhiren shitian moruo se* 治人事天、莫若嗇. Because it is the first sentence of the whole chapter 59. If it is wrong, definitely leading to a wrong understanding of the chapter. Firstly, what is the exact meaning of *se*? The first character that comes to my mind is 'frugality', which means 'the quality of being economical with money or food'.[1] Besides, Yu Peilin also explained it as *se zhizhe aiqi jingshen seqi zhishiye* 嗇之者，愛其精神，嗇其智識也 , in other words, the character se means cherish one's vitality and save one's knowledge.[2] However, if I translate like this 'it must be frugality that can govern the people and practice the Dao of heaven', which may lead to a misunderstanding. Ordinary readers maybe regard it as cherish one's money

[1] Lexico Dictionary (2020), *Frugality | Meaning of frugality in English*, https://www.lexico.com/definition/frugality, accessed 20 Feb 2020.
[2] Yu peilin 余培林, Xinyi Laozi duben 新譯老子讀本(Taipei: sanmin shuju 三民書局, 2017), 122-123.

instead of restricting his mind and desires. What is more, the original meaning of *se* is *shouhuo guwu jiayi chucang* 收穫穀物，加以儲藏(harvest the grain and store it) [3], which is the same as the annotation of Shi Deqing that *se youer buyong zhiyi* 嗇，有而不用之意 (The character *se* means that they own everything but do not attach to it).[4] Actually, Shi Deqing's explanation for *se* is more understandable and has a deeper observation. For we can restore to the self-nature by putting an end to the worldly desires. Therefore my final translation for the sentence is 'it is must be *se* (that owning everything but do not attach to it) can put an end to the worldly desires and restore to the self-nature of heaven'.

6. Self-Reflection

When I see the sentence of *fu qingnuo bi guaxin* 夫輕諾必寡信(If someone makes promise too lightly, he would be less reliable). I realise that most of the times I favour to force myself to do things that I cannot finish. For example, recently our academy is prepare for the quarantine period of our teachers and students. I would like to help Venerable Master Shengmiao to ease his burden, and I made the promise that I could take on the disinfection process. But I did not realise that I still have my oral presentation examination several days later. Therefore, I learn that would rather say little do more than make promise too lightly.

7. Bibliography

7.1 Books

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