

The Translation of *Daodejing*

The Original Text of *Daodejing*:

《道德經》第六十八章：「善為士者不武；善戰者不怒；善勝敵者不爭；善用人者為之下。是謂不爭之德，是謂用人之力，是謂配天，古之極。」¹

——Master Hanshan 憨山大師《老子道德經解·莊子內篇註》

Four Kinds of English Translation of *Daodejing*:

1

Chapter 68:

The best charioteers do not rush ahead;

The best fighters do not make displays of wrath.

The greatest conqueror wins without joining issue;

The best user of men acts as though he were their inferior.

This is called the power that comes of not contending,

Is called the capacity to use men,

The secret of being mated to heaven, to what was of old.²

—— Translated into English by Arthur Waley

2

Chapter 70:

A wise warrior is not violent:

A skillful fighter is not angry;

A clever winner is not vengeful;

A masterful leader is not pretentious.

This is the virtue of avoiding competition;

This is the art of dealing with people.

¹ Master Hanshan 憨山大師註, *Laozi Daodejingjie-Zhuzngzi Neipianzhu* 《老子道德經解·莊子內篇註》 (Tainan: Shetuan Faren Gaoxiongshi Jinzong Xuehui, 2018), p. 168.

² Translated into English by Arthur Waley, Translated into Modern Chinese by Chen Guying, Revised and Annotated by Fu Huisheng, *Laozi* 老子 (Hunan: Hunan People's Publishing House and Foreign Languages Press, 1999), p. 139.

This is the way of conforming to Tao;
This is an axiom of long standing.³

—— Translated by Wang Rongpei and William Puffenberger

3

Chapter 68:

A good soldier

Does not use mayhem.

A good warrior

Does not show anger.

A good winner

Does not contest.

A good employer

Remains humble.

That is called the virtue of non-contention;

It is also called knowing how to use people,

And being worthy of Heaven.

It was the ultimate principle of ancient times.⁴

—— Translated by Charles Q. Wu

4

Chapter 68:

Therefore, one who is good at being a warrior doesn't make a show of his might;

One who is good in battle doesn't get angry;

One who is good at defeating the enemy doesn't engage him.

And one who is good at using men places himself below them.

This is called the virtue of not competing;

This is called [correctly] using men;

This is called matching Heaven.

It's the high point of the past.⁵

³ Translated by Wang Rongpei and William Puffenberger, *Tao Te Ching* (Liaoning; Liaoning University Press, 1996), p. 189.

⁴ Charles Q. Wu, *Thus spoke Laozi: A New Translation with Commentaries of Daodejing* (United States of America: University of Hawai'i Press, 2016), p. 146.

Comments on the Four Translations Above

First of all, these four translations which I found could be separated into two groups: East Publication (which is known as Chinese local publication) and Western Publication. Although those translations were doing the same things: translating the original text of *Daodejing* from Ancient Chinese into English, I think the authors' translation styles are different based on the target audiences for publishing and the time for publishing.

For the target audiences for publishing, I realised that there are some similar sentences from those two translations of the Western Publication. For example, there is only a minor change in the fifth and sixth translation sentences of the original text between those two translations. Besides, even though those four translations had their target audiences for publishing, those authors had also attempted to cite the former's translation as fundamental when translating since our technology development has improved within these 20 years. For instance, I also realised some slight modifications from the earliest translation version of 1996 until the translation version of 2018. Indeed, there are only some vocabularies replaced in the translations but the concepts have remained the same.

In my personal view, I think the second translation which was written by two authors is the best translation throughout the four translations. Since one of the authors of the translation is a Chinese person, Wang Rongpei and the other is an American person, William Puffenberger, they could based on their cultures and knowledge understand the Chinese original text as well as translate them into English. I would also like the last three translation sentences of the original text which directly describe the meaning of the Chinese original text by applying a good and fluent English language.

My Translation

Daodejing Chapter 68:

A wise warrior is not always being violent;

A skillful fighter is not easily being angry;

A clever winner is not consistently being competitive;

A smart leader is constantly being humble.

⁵ Translated with an Introduction and Commentary by Robert G. Henricks, *Lao-Tzu Te-Tao Ching: A New Translation Based on the Recently Discovered Ma-Wang-Tui Texts* (New York: The Random House Publishing Group, 1989), p.68.

This is the virtue of non-contention;

This is the art of using people;

This is the way of conforming to the nature (*Dao* 道), which could be permanent since ancient time.

The Reasons of Translating

This translation is written for the general readers of newspapers who are interested in learning Chinese culture. For the first four translation sentences, I would like to describe those positions and moral ethics by using medium vocabulary adjective form and placing them in a unified structure in every sentence. This could show the format of the Ancient Chinese original text which would lead the reader to know more about the structures of the Ancient Chinese language. It is also a kind of poem-writing format in the English language field. Besides, the adjective words which I used in these four translation sentences could also be easily understood by a pre-intermediate reader which could generally be read by most people.

Secondly, for the last three translation sentences, I would like to conclude by pointing out the main concept of this chapter. Indeed, these three translation sentences express those moral ethics above are a good virtue as well as a kind of art in human management which have been passed down since ancient Chinese history.