

A Translation of Chapters 59 and 63 of the *Taodejing* 道德經 and their Annotations by Shi Deqing

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1. Original text and translation of chapter 59 of the *Taodejing* 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

1.2 Translation

The best way to govern people and serve heaven and earth is frugality. Only frugality will soon recovery. Quick recovery of nature is the accumulation merits of virtue. If we can accumulate more merits of virtuous will we be able to restrain everything. When we can restrain everything we do not know the end. When we do not know the end we can govern a country. With the foundation of governance, the country can last. This is the method of deep-rooted and immortal.

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

2.1 Original text – Part A

¹ (明) 憨山德清 著 尚之煜 校釋: 《老子道德經解》(北京: 中華書局, 2020 年 7 月), 頁 121。

「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

2.2 Translation of Part A

This is to say the saint's distancing from desire and restore their innate nature. The Chinese characters 'Se 嗇' is means owning but not using. The two characters of 'Ren Tian 人天' mentioned by Lao Tzu are very clearly explained by Zhuang Zi. For example, this sentence says '不以人害天，不以物傷性. (Do not hurt heaven because of people, do not hurt nature because of material.)' The Chinese characters 'Ren 人' is means the desire for material things. The other characters 'Tian 天' is means innate nature. The so-called '治人事天莫若嗇.' The Chinese characters 'Se 嗇' here is means the ability to recover our innate nature. When a saint is an emperor, he has all the wealth in the world. His children and his satins, the pleasures of sound and sight, the benefits of every kind, were all before him. However, the sages still hold on to his Tao, seeing all this as nothing without any desire, having it but not using 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

² (明) 憨山德清 著 尚之煜 校釋：《老子道德經解》，頁 122。

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。」³

2.4 Translation of Part B

This is exactly ‘堯舜有天下而不與.(Yao and Shun possessed the world but did not possess it.)’ This is the use of ‘Se’ to govern the people. When the sage rules over the world, his wisdom is universal. He doesn't hurt his true nature by working and worrying for his own sake. The so-called ‘毋搖爾精，毋勞爾形，毋使汝思慮營營(Do not waste our energy, do not strain our body, let us not clutter our thoughts.)’ Therefore, to have wisdom without using it. This is using ‘Se’ to sever heaven and there is no quicker ability than this to recover our innate nature. Therefore, it says ‘是謂之早復(Will recover quickly.)’ The Chinese character ‘Fu 復’ here means ‘不遠復(not too far away and back)’ the divinatory symbols of ‘Fu’ in Book of Changes described. It means very fast. The sentence ‘一日克己復禮，天下歸仁 (One day forbear and restore manners, and the world will return to benevolence)’ also means this.

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。」⁴

³ (明) 憨山德清 著 尚之煜 校釋：《老子道德經解》，頁 122。

⁴ (明) 憨山德清 著 尚之煜 校釋：《老子道德經解》，頁 122。

2.6 Translation of Part C

Chuang Tzu said ‘賊莫大於德有心 (The biggest problem is intentional kindness.)’ Intentional kindness is external, so it is light and not thick. The ability to recover our innate nature will restore it gradually. It is something we recover without intentional to recover. The so-called reply to see the heaven and earth again. Therefore, it says ‘早復謂之重積德 (Quick recovery of nature is the accumulation merits of virtue.)’ If we can accumulate more merits of virtuous will we be able to restrain everything. The mean of character ‘Ke 克’ is the same as the Chinese word ‘克己’, which means overcome. The word ‘Ke’ in ‘顏子克己復禮’ is the same meaning. With the increasing of innate nature, the desire for material is gradually melting. Where the sage passes, everything is touched, and nothing can get in the way. This kind of virtue is noble and vast, the people did not get and naturally praised him.

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。」⁵

2.8 Translation of Part D

Therefore, it says ‘無不克,則莫知其極.(There are no boundaries when we can control the desires.)’ The Chinese character ‘Ji 極’ is means reached the pole, the most marginal place.

⁵ (明) 憨山德清 著 尚之煜 校釋: 《老子道德經解》, 頁 122。

When his virtuous as a saint, he does not want to own the world, but he can entrust it to him. Therefore, it says ‘莫知其極,可以有國.(Do not know the edge, you can have a country.)’ This is the ability to be saintly within. His true nature can govern one of his own, the rest can govern the world. Therefore, it says ‘可以有國.(You can have a country.)’ The Tao is older than the birth of heaven and earth, but it cannot be said to be old, nor can it be said to end when it appears after the birth of heaven and earth. Therefore, it says ‘可以長久.(The Tao can last.)’ This is what the ancients said ‘深根固蒂長生久視之道.(The method of deep-rooted and immortal.)’ The ending sentence is an old saying. Lao Tzu used this quote to summarize his meaning.

3. Original text and translation of chapter 63 of the *Taodejing* 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。」⁶

3.2 Translation

Do something promising with a heart of inaction, do something real with a heart of nothing, and try something tasteful with a sense of tasteless. Small is great, and less is more. Repay hatred with virtue. Do the hard things in simple places. Do the big things from the details. All the difficult things in the world should start from simple, and all the big things in the world should start from details. The sage did not aspire to great things, but in the end achieved great things. He who promises easily will seldom keep his word, and what is easy before will be difficult after. Saints always think more difficult and in the end it is not difficult.

⁶ (明) 憨山德清 著 尚之煜 校釋: 《老子道德經解》，頁 127。

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。」⁷

4.2 Translation of Part A

It is about the wonders of the sages tally with the Tao, and to show people the truth method. The things we do is wise and ingenious. The works we do is meritorious. What we are interested in is the desire for fame and profit. These three are admired by the people. The Tao, however, is originally nonbeing and do nothing, quiet and workless, most insipid and tasteless. Only the sage has the Tao in mind and give up those choose to be the same as the Tao. Therefore, ordinary people value status and reputation, and choose to pursue more salary. However, Tao is nonbeing, indifferent to fame and wealth without material, so the sage is very careful about fame and wealth and give up those not to strive for.

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

⁷ (明) 憨山德清 著 尚之煜 校釋：《老子道德經解》，頁 128。

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。」⁸

4.4 Translation of Part B

The sage gave up his credit and fame, gave up his wisdom and forgot himself to travel alone with the Tao. He is taking out the majority and taking out the minority. Therefore, he sees the smallest as the biggest, the least as the most, so expand small places, add fewer places. Try to observe how people repay resentment with virtue and we can understand. Why? The most difficult thing for ordinary people, rich or poor, to solve is the resentment between people. However, the beginning of resentment is an accidental language error or something wrong, and then resentment will be formed between each other, and finally lead to the murder and even the destruction of the country and the family. Some even accumulated resentment so deep that they retaliated against each other for generations.

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。」⁹

4.6 Translation of Part C

⁸ (明) 憨山德清 著 尚之煜 校釋：《老子道德經解》，頁 128。

⁹ (明) 憨山德清 著 尚之煜 校釋：《老子道德經解》，頁 128。

This has not changed since ancient times. Is not it just too big and too much? The sages do not do that. He will perceive that resentment does not exist when there is no resentment, that resentment is small when it begins, and that when it occurs it will not affect him. Therefore, he does not have an obstinate heart and will not make an enemy of anything. When the matter is over, the resentment will be naturally dissolved, and when you want to find the trace can not be found. Therefore, whatever the other person hates, there is no revenge in the sage's heart. However, the other side thinks that I have resentment, but in fact I do not want to revenge the heart. Therefore, the other side will think that I have good virtue.

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。」¹⁰

4.8 Translation of Part D

This is what is called ‘報怨以德(The man who came for revenge thinks you're virtuous)’, rather than being misinterpreted to mean rewarding resentment with virtue. This is what Confucius meant when he said, ‘以直報怨(Repay resentment with candor)’. There are so many grudges between people and everyone can't forget them. What they don't know is that there is a simple solution. This is ‘為無為，事無事(Act with a mind without action, and do with a mind without doing)’and this is sees the smallest as the biggest, the least as the most. It is not just about resentment, it is about everything.

¹⁰ (明) 憨山德清 著 尚之煜 校釋：《老子道德經解》，頁 129。

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。」¹¹

4.10 Translation of Part E

Therefore, the most difficult things in the world have the simplest things in them, and the biggest things have the smallest details in them. Ordinary people do not see the simple and small aspects, always start from the difficult to do, from the big place to do. If you can start easy and start small, very few things don't work out. This is the reason why it says ‘天下難事必作於易，天下大事必作於細(All the difficult things in the world should start from simple, and all the big things in the world should start from details.)’ The Chinese character ‘Zuo 作’is means origin. The sages was humbly experience of the Tao and retreated to a secret place. The more he hides his trail, the more the Tao reveals itself. This is ‘終不為大，故能成其大也.(The sage did not aspire to great things, but in the end achieved 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，

¹¹ (明) 憨山德清 著 尚之煜 校釋：《老子道德經解》，頁 129。

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。」¹²

4.12 Translation of Part F

Lao Tzu said here is afraid that ordinary people will be the character ‘Yi 易’ as easy. Therefore, he admonishes the world, ‘夫輕諾必寡信，多易必多難(He who promises easily will seldom keep his word, and what is easy before will be difficult after.)’ This is about the people not treating things as if they were easy. The word ‘Qingnuo 輕諾’ means to make easy promises to others. A man who makes promises easily will seldom keep them. A man who sees a thing easy and does it easily is sure to never finish it. Therefore, the character ‘Yi 易’ does not mean easy. What ordinary people think difficult is easy for sages; ordinary people think easy and sages think difficult.

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。」¹³

4.14 Translation of Part G

¹² (明) 憨山德清 著 尚之煜 校釋: 《老子道德經解》，頁 129。

¹³ (明) 憨山德清 著 尚之煜 校釋: 《老子道德經解》，頁 129。

Therefore, it says ‘聖人猶難之,故終無難.(Saints always think more difficult and in the end it is not difficult.)’ The Chinese character ‘You 猶’ should be written as ‘You 尤’. In ancient times these two characters were universal and meant more. This means that what ordinary people think is easy, a sages thinks is harder, so it is not difficult in the end. For example, Ji Chang and Ji Dan are very careful and diligent. They are very careful about what they have not seen or heard. This is the difficulty of the sages. When I was a child, I read these two sentences, ‘圖難於易,為大於細.(Do a difficult thing start simple, do a big thing start small.)’, and regarded them only as ordinary things. When I went to the mountain to learn the Tao, it was very difficult at first, and the inner difficulties were beyond words. It was very easy until I got the knack of it. However, the difficulty of begin was the present easy, and the present easy was the former difficult. While it is so to govern the mind, it is so to push it to anything. This is the sages tally with the Tao, and to show people the truth method. Encourage people who are interested in learning Tao.

5. Commentary

After I got this article, I still felt that it was difficult for me to understand it, so I still used the method of reading it again and again to help myself understand the article. After that, if I encounter a Chinese character that I don't know, I will query *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* to understand its Chinese meaning. In the process of translation, when selecting a word, it will look up the English-English dictionary for selection. Then I put the words into the text to see if they fit. Finally, the translation is corrected by reading the translated English.

6. Reflection

In this process of translation, the biggest difficulty I encountered was still the understanding of the original text. I still try to understand the text by constantly reading. I find that I can deepen my understanding of the text in the process of translation. For example, when I translate a Chinese word, I need to constantly consider my Choice of English words. In this process, I will constantly compare the meaning of English words with the meaning of Chinese words, and this process can often help me find some new meanings or my own mistakes.

After translating these two paragraphs, the most beneficial thing for me is to understand that there is no absolutely difficult or easy thing in the world. As the article says, ‘All the difficult things in the world should start from simple, And all the big things in the world should start from details.’ The same is true for my translation of this article. It was very difficult at the beginning, but as I gradually began to understand and find the method, the translation gradually became smooth. Of course, it is not just about translation. It is also mentioned in the article that it can be applied to anything. The key point is that we can put down our desire and calmly deal with everything. This is my biggest experience after this translation. Finally, I am grateful to my teacher, who taught us these lessons and benefited me a lot.

7. Bibliography

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