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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

The best for administering people and respecting the heavens is to use *se*. Only *se* can reveal inner nature fast, which called *zaofu*. *Zaofu* means a large quantity of merit accumulating. If one can accumulate plenty of merits, then he is able to overcome everything. When nothing can obstruct him, his influence will be endless. When he has endless influence, he is able to rule a country. The origin of administering a country can make things long lasting. This is the Dao of how to be 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

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 tells sages detach from desire and reveal their inner nature, as the Dao of *waiwang neisheng*, which means being sage within and capable like a king on the outside. The word *se* means possessing but not spending. Zhuangzi had clearly explained what Laozi spoke of man and the heavens. For example, ‘Never hurt the heavens for human, never harm the inner nature for material things.’ The word *ren* means material desires. The word *tian* means inner virtue. This is what means, ‘The best for administering people and respecting the heavens is to use *se*.’ The word *se* means the practice of revealing the inner nature. It means when sages are in power, they are highly-placed and the whole country is in command. There are descendants, jade, silks, women, songs, goods and profits right in front of them. However, sages insist in their integrity by the Dao, regard those things as nothing. They are in tranquility without desire, though they possess, they do not use.

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。又如一曰克己復禮，天下歸仁之意。

2.4 Translation of Part B

This is what called ‘Emperor Yao and Shun possessed the country but do not take part in it.’ This shows how to administer people by *se*. Sages are magnanimous enough to tolerate the four seas, wise enough to consider all things. They will not hurt their inner nature by

laboriously using personal intelligence. This is what called ‘Not fluctuating your spirit, not tiring your physicality, not contemplating again and again.’ Having wisdom but do not utilising it, this is how they respect the heavens by *se*. No practice of revealing inner nature can be faster than this. Thus, this is called *zaofu*. The word *fu* means ‘Returning when just had hardly walked into the wrong way’, written in (*the Book of Changes*) chapter Fu. Telling the rapidity of it. And it is also the meaning of ‘Once a person can control himself and return to propriety, then all things will turn into benevolence.’

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 says, ‘No calamity is bigger than intentional virtue.’ However, the intentional virtue can only benefit the surface of things, it is insignificant and not profound. By the practice of revealing the inner nature, the natural virtue gets perfect daily. Even without expectation of returning, one can naturally return to the right path and reveal his inner nature. This means returning and seeing the natural virtue of the heavens and earth. Therefore it says, ‘*Zaofu* means plenty of merit accumulating.’ If one can accumulate plenty of merit, he is able to overcome everything. This word *ke* means overcoming (the enemy). It also means controlling (oneself), which is a virtue of Yanzi. The deeper inner virtue get, the weaker material desires are. Hence, wherever he passes by, all things will be reformed and nothing can obstruct him. His virtue is so brilliant and broad that people feel much more than words

can ever name it. Therefore it says, ‘When no things can obstruct him, his influence can be endless.’

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 says, ‘When no things can obstruct him, his influence can be endless.’ The word *ji* means the end, and it also means the boundary of tolerance. This means when the inner virtue of *neisheng* has perfected, though one has no intention with taking part in worldly affairs, one is able to be entrusted this responsibility. Hence it says, ‘The one who has endless merit and influence is able to establish and rule a country.’ This is the Dao of *neisheng*, the essence of which can be used to cultivate oneself, and the rest part of it can be used to administer a country. Hence it says, ‘Is able to establish and rule a country.’ This Dao is never being old though it was born before the heaven and earth, it never stops though it is lasting after the heavens and earth. Therefore, it says, ‘It will be long lasting.’ This is what ancient people talked about the Dao of how to be deep-rooted and immortal. The sign-off is an ancient phrase, Laozi quoted it as a conclusion of his idea.

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

Acting unintentionally. Handling things as there is nothing to it. Tasting things without taste.

Regarding small things as the big, less as many. Returning kindness to resentment.

Considering difficulties from its easy part, handling big tasks from its small details. The
difficulties in the world should start solving from its easy part. The big tasks in the world
should begin from its small details. Therefore, sages never think they are doing big things so
that they can achieve greatness eventually. It is hard to keep easy promises. Easy things are
always accompanied by difficulties. Sages treat things as difficulties while there is no
difficulties eventually.

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 talks about the essence of how sages can follow the Dao in practice and showing it
concretely in reality. All actions called cleverness, affairs called career, flavour called fame
and fortune. These three things are highly emphasised by the whole world. However, the Dao
is void without acting, tranquil without affairs, ordinary without exciting. Only sages can

cherish the Dao as their integrity, avoiding those three things and taking these three. Thus, for them, what they do are not intentional, what they are engaged in are uneventful, what they taste are insipid. Therefore, ordinary people attach importance to reputation and status, profit making is also highly regarded so that they take these as value. While the Dao is so subtle, void and seemed nothing that people think it is too little to follow so that they 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

Conversely, sages discard accomplishments and fame and let go their intelligence and shapes, while only travel with the Dao. They are discarding the major part while taking the small part. Hence, they regard the smallest as the biggest, the least as the most. Hence, it is emphasising the small things and growing the minor part. We can know this from seeing the phenomenon of returning kindness to resentment in the world. Why so? In addition, no matter how high or low status that people have, the most difficult thing to solve is resentment. At the beginning of resentment, it occasionally caused by a mistake of a mere sentence and a carelessness of little things. Then the two sides became entangled with each other till destroying themselves and fame, even their families and the whole country. Sometimes there are deep resentment between families, which has entangled their descendants in a series of conflicts with each other.

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 the general reason through the ages. Isn't this for the reason of thinking things importantly? However, sages are not thinking like this. They observe that before the beginning of resentment is of nothing. That there is nothing before the resentment happened. Once things became entangled, it is not a big deal. Though it entangled, they think it is nothing to do with them. They do not attach to any thing and have no self to stay opposite with things. Once things have passed, it is naturally disappeared and impossible to seek the trace. From this view, even others have complaints against me, I will have no thoughts of revenge. When others suppose I have a complain but actually there is not, they will think I am virtuous and kind to them.

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 means *baoyuan yide*, instead of showing kindness to complainers intentionally. This is the meaning of what Confucius said, 'Returning directly to resentment.' Resentment is the biggest and commonest among all matters, which every one can encounter

it. Little do we know that there is the easiest things right inside. This is what called ‘Doing things unintentionally, handling matters as there is nothing to it. Emphasising the small things and growing the minor part.’ Not only resentment, all things in world are the same.

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 is something easiest right inside the most difficult thing. And there is something tiniest right inside the biggest thing. People who handle things from the difficult and big sides will achieve nothing. If people can consider things from the easy part and start handling from small details, few of them will not succeed. The reason is that, the difficulties in the world should start solving from its easy part and big tasks should begin from its small details. *Zuo* means start doing. Sages keep an open mind to follow the Dao and return to the unrecognised place. The more unrecognised their manifestations are, the more brilliant their Dao is. They achieve immortality and exist like the heavens and earth. This is what means that, ‘For they never think they are doing big things, they can achieve greatness eventually.’

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 Laozi came to here, for fear of ordinary people regard the word *yi* as the meaning of easy or rash. Thus he warned, 'It is hard to keep easy promises, easy things are always accompanied by difficulties.' To tell people not to treat things lightly. Furthermore, promising easily is called *qingnuo*. The one who promises easily is sure to go back on his word and have little trustworthiness. The one who rashly engage in things that seemed easy is sure to end up without finish. Thus the word *yi* is not meant to generally easy, in stead, it means that what ordinary people think to be difficult are what sages think to be easy. And what ordinary people think to be easy are what sages think to be 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。

4.14 Translation of Part G

Therefore it says 'Sages treat things as difficulties while there is no difficulties eventually.' You should be written as you, these two words are interchangeable to each other. Now it corrects. This means things that ordinary people regard it as easy things are those of which sages treat it as difficulties, thus, finally, there will not be any difficulties for sages. For example, King Wen of Zhou dynasty and Duke of Zhou had been cautious and awed in their

position, being cautious and awed and not to see and hear. All these are difficulties to sages. I learned the teaching of ‘Considering difficulties from its easy part, handling big tasks from its small details’ since childhood, I only regarded it as a principle of doing things. When I went up the mountain to learn, there were extreme difficulties and inexpressibly suffering at first. Until I get the core of controlling mind, then I felt it easy. Then the initial difficulties had become the easy things now. While the easy things at present were from the difficulties before. Moreover, since administering mind is worked like this, thus, all things in the world can be treated like this. This is the practice of how to follow the Dao, pointed out by sages. This is an encouragement to learners who have ambitions of following the Dao.

5. Commentary

My whole version is translated with the help of some of the most authoritative dictionaries in both Chinese and English. The main process I used is that I looked up most of the words embedded in the text from source language to target language and tried to select and present the most appropriate definitions and expressions to readers.

6. Reflection

It is mentioned in the annotation that Zhuangzi says, ‘No calamity is bigger than intentional virtue.’ I felt the key word is intentional. It has been a common phenomenon that when we want to achieve something and strongly care about the win and lose, things always failed. But when we are relaxed and without any intention or expectation, sometimes it works. Therefore, it would free us from suffering since we do things only by following our good nature and doing them with a pure mind, but not a mass of various intentions. by detaching from the intention of having the perfect ending, we would be more peaceful and comfortable in life.

Moreover, the word calamity indicates a relationship between situations and ourselves. Being virtuous and doing favour is good, but when all these become an attachment of something to show off, then good things would turn into bad things because our mind is no longer concentrating on the essence of helping others or the situation needs, but on the very personal, even selfish side. And when we are considering personal gains and losses if things happened, it would be a calamity and shame to our virtue. This is how I understand the word calamity.

In conclusion, we should concentrate on our own duties and efforts and follow the situation, then we could obtain peace and happiness.