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**Calligraphy Meets Philosophy - Talk 1 (尚語 - 第一話)**

*Revisions to An English Translation and the Correct Interpretation of Laozi's Tao Te Ching*

**Revisions to “An English Translation and  
the Correct Interpretation of Laozi's Tao Te Ching”**

KS Vincent POON (潘君尚) & Kwok Kin POON (潘國鍵)

**This document outlines 15 revisions to our book, *An English Translation and the Correct Interpretation of Laozi's Tao Te Ching* (英譯並正解老子道德經, Toronto: The SenSeis, 2020). The numbers at the beginning of the original Chinese text are identical to those found in the book.**

**Revisions are represented by the underlined texts.**

**69. 希言自然。故飄風不終朝，驟雨不終日。孰為此者？天地。天地尚不能久，而況於人乎！**

The words (言) from Tao's fundamental nature (自然) are the tranquilities that can never be heard (希). Therefore, sounds from violent winds (飄風) do not last from one morning to the other (朝), and noises from sudden torrential rains (驟雨) do not last for an entire day. What directs all these? The Universe. Even the Universe cannot make its own act last forever, let alone (況於) mere humans!

**105. 柔弱勝剛強。魚不可脫於淵。國之利器不可以示人。**

The gentle and weak is better than (勝) the bold and strong. A lively fish should not leave its soothing and abyssal niche (淵). Mighty and powerful instruments that benefit the state (國之利器) should not be displayed to the people.

**112. 昔之得一者：天得一以清；地得一以寧；神得一以靈；谷得一以盈；萬物得一以生；侯王得一以為天下貞。其致之。**

Those that have obtained One since the past are: Nature, which carries One to become pure and clear (清); Earth, which carries One to become settled and established (寧); the spirits, which carry One to obtain their vitalities (靈); the valleys (谷), which

carry One to become filled with abundant diversity (盈); all things, which carry One to live and exist (生); the rulers (侯王) of states, who carry One to become the heads (貞)<sup>(1)</sup> of states. The One (其) fulfils and realizes (致) all their corresponding characteristics (之).

Note (1): “貞” is “正 (govern)”. See 《易經•乾卦》“元亨利貞” (Zhengzhou: 中州古籍出版社, 1993, p.1), “貞, 正也” (citing 《周易正義》 in the same book, p.2). And “正” is “長 (head/governor)”. See 《爾雅•釋詁》, “正, 長也”(郭璞, 《爾雅郭注》 Volume 1, 釋詁下, p.17a. Taipei: 新興書局, 1964, p.011). Thus “貞” should be “heads of states (君長)”.

**116. 上士聞道, 勤而行之; 中士聞道, 若存若亡; 下士聞道, 大笑之。不笑不足以為道。**

Those of the highest calibre (上士), when they hear about (聞) Tao, earnestly (勤) act according to it. Those of the average calibre (中士), when they hear about Tao, sometimes keep (存) it and sometimes lose (亡) it. Those of the lowest calibre (下士), when they hear about Tao, laugh greatly at it; if it were not laughed at by them, it would not be fit to be Tao.

**119. 道生一; 一生二; 二生三; 三生萬物。萬物負陰而抱陽, 沖氣以為和。**

Tao spawned (生) One; One spawned Two; Two spawned Three; Three spawned all things. All things possess the negative (陰, Yin) and embrace the positive (陽, Yang), and the interactions (沖) between these two countering forces (氣) make all things cohesive in harmony (和).

**136. 聖人在天下, 歛歛為天下渾其心。聖人皆孩之。**

The wise sages living under Heaven have no prejudice (歛歛) of their own and turn the minds (心) of all under Heaven back to their primitive simplistic natures (渾). The wise sages make all revert back to the states of being newborn babies (孩).

**139. 道生之，德畜之；物形之，勢成之。是以萬物莫不尊道而貴德。**  
Tao begets (生) all things, the Manifestation of Tao nurtures (畜) all things. Tao applies shapes and forms (物) to exhibit (形) all things and uses styles and manners (勢) to establish all things. Therefore, all things honour Tao and exalt its Manifestation.

**140. 道之尊，德之貴，夫莫之命而常自然。故道生之，德畜之；長之育之，亭之毒之；養之覆之。生而不有，為而不恃，長而不宰。是謂玄德。**

Although Tao should be honoured and its Manifestation exalted, all things do not need to be directed (命) by them to invariably (常) follow Tao's own nature (自然). Tao begets (生) all, and its Manifestation nurtures (畜) all; they both rear (長) all, raise (育) all, cultivate (亭) all, develop (毒) all, feed (養) all, and return (覆) all back to Tao. Tao begets all without anything (不有), acts without relying (不恃) on any other, and oversees (長) all without dominating (宰) over them. Such is known as the “Most Mysterious Manifestation of Tao (玄德)”.

**176. 古之善為道者，非以明民，將以愚之。民之難治，以其智多。故以智治國，國之賊；不以智治國，國之福。知此兩者亦稽式。**

Those in the past who are well-acquainted (善) with Tao act not to make the people more intelligent (明) but rather to make them less intelligent. The people become difficult to govern because (以) they have too much acquired intelligence (智). Those who use acquired intelligence to govern are vandals (賊) to the state, while those who do not are blessings (福) to the state. Governing (知)<sup>(2)</sup> both these cases is the same (稽) law (式) that follows Tao.

Note (2): “知” here means “主 (to oversee)”. See 《易經•繫辭》「乾知大始」(As in note (1), p.223), and 《左傳•襄公二十六年》「公孫揮曰：子產其將知政矣」(《左傳白話譯註》，Shanghai: 上海書店, 1985, p.913). Thus, “知” can take the meaning of “to oversee (主)”, and it is here interpreted as “to govern (掌管)”.

177. 常知稽式，是謂玄德。玄德深矣，遠矣，與物反矣，然後乃至大順。

This unchanging and everlasting Tao (常) governing (知) with the same law (稽式) in all cases is known as the “Most Mysterious Manifestation of Tao (玄德)”. This “Most Mysterious Manifestation of Tao” is so deep (深) and far-reaching (遠) indeed that it engages (與) in reverting (反) all worldly matters to their respective inherent simplicities. Eventually (然後), all then (乃) shall reach (至) to the “Great Conformity to Tao (大順)”.

182. 我有三寶，持而保之：一曰慈，二曰儉，三曰不敢為天下先。慈故能勇；儉故能廣；不敢為天下先，故能成器長。

I have three treasures (三寶) that I always uphold (持) and rely on (保): the first is earnest adoration (慈) of Tao, the second is frugality (儉), and the third is not daring to lead and be the most preeminent (先) among all under Heaven. When one adores Tao, one can thus be courageous (勇); when one is frugal, one can thus flourish (廣); when one dares not to lead and be the most preeminent among all under Heaven, one can thus become (成) a venerable and agreeable (器) leader (長) among all.

185. 是謂不爭之德，是謂用人之力，是謂配天古之極。

Such is known as the attainment (德) of being not competitive, the genuine way to unleash the true capabilities (力) of one’s subordinates, and being compatible (配) with the pinnacle (極) of the laws (古)<sup>(3)</sup> of Nature (天).

Note (3): “古” here is “故”. See 《爾雅郭注》「古，故也」(As in note (1), p11a, p.008). “故” is “laws (事理/法則)”. See 《易經·繫辭》“仰以觀於天文，俯以察於地理，是故知幽明之故”(As in note (1), p. 225). Thus, “古” can be interpreted as “laws”. As such, “天古” here refers to “laws of Nature.”

208. 孰能有餘以奉天下，唯有道者！是以聖人為而不恃，功成而不處。其不欲見賢。

Who then can take from the abundant to gift (奉) to all under

Heaven? Only Tao, of course (者)! Hence, wise sages act without relying on others (不恃) and accomplish without claiming any credit. They never wish to show (見) any talent (賢) to anyone.

217. 信言不美, 美言不信; 善者不辯, 辯者不善; 知者不博, 博者不知。

True and honest words (信言) are never nice, while nice words are never true and honest. Those who are well acquainted (善) with Tao do not embellish their words (辯), while those who embellish their words are not well acquainted with Tao. Those who understand (知) Tao do not understand a wide range (博) of acquired knowledge, while those who understand a wide range of acquired knowledge do not understand Tao.

**As for footnote (108) of the book annotating “新”:**

(108) “新” here actually means “親”. “親, 又通作新”, see *Kangxi Dictionary* (《康熙字典》).

An excellent example of equating “新” with “親” can be found in the *Book of Documents - Metal-bound Coffin* (《尚書•金縢》): “惟朕小子其新逆.” See 孔安國《尚書孔傳•周書•金縢》. Taipei: 新興書局, 1964, p.043. Jiang Boqian (蔣伯潛) further contends:

“尚書金縢篇，成王說：‘惟朕小子其新逆。’成王這句話是說要親自迎接周公。‘親逆’寫作‘新逆’，正和‘新民’寫作‘親民’一樣，這是程朱讀‘親’為‘新’的一個有力旁證。新是去舊維新的意思；‘新民’是使人人能去其舊染之污，‘日日新、又日新’地振作起來。”

Source: 蔣伯潛,《語譯廣解大學讀本》, see 沈知方主稿《語譯廣解四書讀本》. Hong Kong: 香港啟明書局, publication year unknown, p. 2.

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