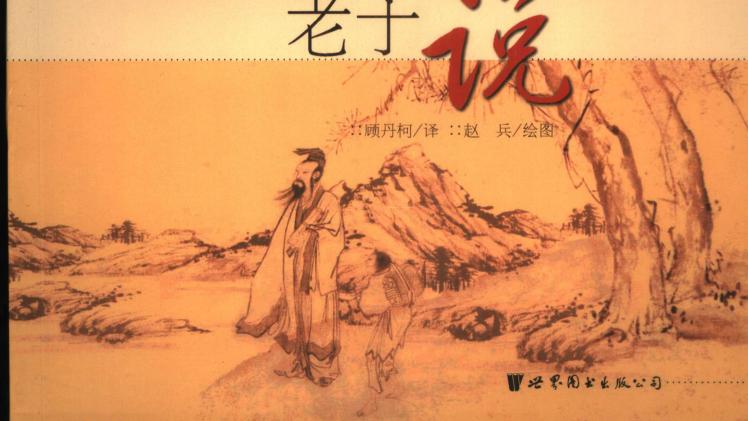


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余幼承家训,情钟于中国古典文学。家严工古代汉语,汉语典籍所藏颇 丰。少时披卷浏览,心旷神怡;及长,手不释卷,挚爱如一。

余痴迷于中国古典文学英译,受惠于许渊冲先生也。弱冠之年,负笈葑门 (江苏师范学院外语系,现苏州大学外国语学院),美籍教师诠释美国意象派鼻祖 庞德 (Ezra Pound) 所译汉诗,饶有兴味。庞译甚佳,惟不谙汉语,舛误良 多,躬译之念顿生。别长洲,栖常州,偶读许渊冲先生译诗及译论,颇受启 迪,捉管小试,奉书博教。先生鱼笺往复,为后生提撕指迷。黄卷青檠凡20 余载、时译时辍、锱铢积累、小成而而。

《老子》凡五千言,文约意赅,博大精深,实乃中国哲学著作之泉源,吾国先民智慧之结晶也。传世弥久,影响深广,远及彼邦。两年前,经舍弟庆阳引荐,上海世界图书出版公司编辑约译《老子》,技痒妄诺。然则,译事难,译中文典籍犹难,译《老子》益难。一曰梳理原文异文难。《老子》越千年,经万手,异文频现,良莠莫辨,择善遴选,委实"理还乱"也。二曰斟酌原文句读难。《老子》传世,有河上公本与王弼本,及1973年马王堆汉墓出土帛书《老子》甲、乙本。诸本不啻文本有别,句读亦大异,解意维艰,极费精神。三曰理解原文含义难。《老子》章句凝练,文中字多义、词多义,难为轩轾。四曰译入英文表达难。遂译中,明理达意,常感辞穷,一词一句,"旬月踟蹰"。

《老子》英译, 汲先辈学人之养, 获亲朋好友之援。参阅作品, 咸列译后, 深表谢忱。吾自知愚钝, 砚耕迟缓, 承蒙上海世图编辑不弃, 耐心可嘉; 泉城李绍明先生赐借珍藏, 慷慨之举感激不已; 舍弟穿针, 棣萼情深难以忘怀。鼎力襄助, 衔戢殊深。

不佞梼昧寡学,薄植不能相副,野芹之献,求教于方家。 是为序。

顾丹柯

2006年3月5日于毗陵



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## Translator's Preface

I developed my interest in classical Chinese literature since childhood, with the influence of my father who was then a teacher of classical Chinese in the Department of Chinese Language and Literature, East China Normal University, Shanghai. As my father has a fairly large collection of classical Chinese books, I would pick and choose any book, especially of classical Chinese poetry, that was at hand and read. Gradually, I became engrossed in them.

When I was an undergraduate student at the Department of Foreign Languages, Jiangsu Teachers College (the present-day School of Foreign Languages, Soochow University), I began to read some Chinese poems in English translation, done by Ezra Pound, the world-famous leading American Imagist poet. Pound's translation in itself is well done, the pity is that there are some misunderstandings in the translation as he was totally ignorant of the Chinese language. Right after my graduation, I read some articles written by Professor Xu Yuanchong on the translation of classical Chinese poems, which exerted a strong impact on me. Ever since then, I started my interest in translating Chinese poems into English. Up to now, I have rendered hundreds of Chinese poems into English, mostly classical, a number of which have found their way in academic journals of English.

Laozi, alias Dao De Jing, in about 5,000 Chinese characters, is one of the origins of classical Chinese philosophy, and the testimony of the wisdom of early Chinese people. It is expressed in concise and profound language. Its influence has not only exerted on the Chinese people, but on people of other countries as well, thanks to its numerous translations in other languages. About two years ago, recommended by my youngest brother, an editor from Shanghai World Publishing Corporation asked me to translate Laozi, which was certainly a challenge. As I had never translated any book of classical Chinese philosophy, I was eager to try my hand at it, so I accepted the hard nut. But I

had never imagined the nut was too hard to crack! Firstly, the original Chinese versions are so varied that you can hardly depend on one single version. What I have done here is to form a new Chinese version, based upon the various versions of such Laozi experts as Chen Guying and Zhang Songru. Secondly, in the numerous original Chinese versions, the ways of punctuation are also different. They are so different that the meanings of the Chinese sentences are radically changed. The rub is how to keep the punctuation in agreement in the whole book. Thirdly, the correct understanding of the Chinese is difficult, due to the conciseness and profundity of the original as well as the abovementioned different versions and ways of punctuation. Lastly, the appropriate expression in English is the most difficult. Jonathan Swift once said, to write successfully is to put the "proper words in proper places", and it is also true of translation. Words often failed me as to the right choice of a word or phrase to express what understood in the original.

But for the support and help from the annotators of the original Chinese versions, from my friends and brothers, it would have been impossible for me to complete the translation of Laozi. I will certainly extend my sincere gratitude to the editor from Shanghai World Publishing Corporation, who has been patient enough for my busyness and laziness. Indebtedness is also due to Mr. Li Shaoming from Shandong University, who generously lent me all the books in his private collection concerning Laozi and Laozi translation. And I will also thank my brother who created this opportunity for me. In spite of all the support and help on the part of the abovementioned annotators, my friends and brother, any blunt in the translation is solely mine.

Gu Danke 5 March 2006, Changzhou



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## 上篇

道经



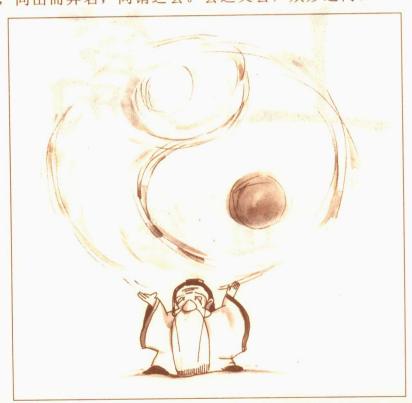
## 一章 Chapter 1

道可道,非常道; 名可名,非常名。

无, 名天地之始; 有, 名万物之母。

故常无,欲以观其妙;常有,欲以观其徼。

此两者,同出而异名,同谓之玄。玄之又玄,众妙之门。



道是可以用语言表达的,但可以表达的道就不是永恒的道; 名是可以说得出来的,但可以说得出来的名就不是永恒的名。

我用"无"来表示天地的始源;我用"有"来表示万物的根本。

所以,我从常无中去观察道体的奥妙;我从常有中去观察道体的端倪。

无和有两者同出于道,只是名称不同而已,都可说是很奥妙的。奥妙之中的奥妙,是一切奥妙的源头。

The Way can be expressed, but the Way that can be expressed is not the eternal Way; the Name can be addressed, but the Name that can be addressed is not the eternal Name.

I use "Non-being" to mean the origin of Heaven and Earth; and I use "Being" to indicate the root of all things in the universe.

Therefore, with the constant "Non-being", I often observe the subtlety of the Way; with the constant "Being", I often observe the working of the Way.

The two, i.e., Non-being and Being, are both from the same origin, but only named differently; both can be said extremely mysterious and profound. The mystery and profundity of the mysterious and profound is the real source of all mysteries and profundities.





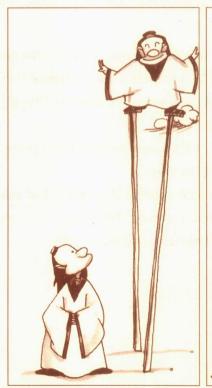


## 二章 Chapter 2

天下皆知美之为美, 斯恶已; 皆知善之为善, 斯不善已。

有无相生,难易相成,长短相形,高下相盈,音声相和,前后相随。

是以圣人处无为之事,行不言之教;万物作而不为始,生而不有,为而不恃,功成而弗居。夫唯弗居,是以不去。





天下都知道美之所以为美, 丑恶就产生了; 都知道善之所以为善, 不善就产生了。

有和无相互生成,难和易相互形成,长和短相互显出,高和下相互呈现,音和声彼此应 和成谐,前和后相互排列而成序。

所以,圣人用无为的态度处理世事,实行"不言"的教导;万物兴起而不造作事端;生养万物而不据为己有;作育万物而不自恃其才能;完成大业而不以有功者自居。正因为不以有功者自居,因此他的功绩才永不泯没。

If the whole world know why beauty is beauty, ugliness appears; if the whole world know why kindness is kindness, evil emerges.

Therefore the "Being" and the "Non-being" generate each other, the difficult and the easy accomplish each other, the long and the short show each other, the upper and the lower complement each other, the sound and the voice harmonize with each other, the fore and the hind succeed each other.

Therefore the sages do by non-action, teach with non-speaking; let all things grow and develop of their own accord, but do not initiate them, grow all things but do not possess them, bestow favours but do not require repayment. Achieve great successes but do not flaunt. Just because Sages do not brag, their achievements will be remembered forever.