



许渊冲 译

Laws Divine and Human

道德经

许渊冲文集



2



海豚出版社
DOLPHIN BOOKS
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1938年江西南昌第二中学毕业时摄，
报考西南联合大学时用。



1997年杨振宁(左)来北京大学讲学,陈佳洱(中)校长设宴招待,许渊冲致祝酒词,说杨振宁的报告把古今中外科学的“真”和艺术的“美”合而为一,为建设世界文化奠下一块基石。



1990年7月26日《英语世界》创刊十周年摄于芳园宾馆。左1许渊冲,2李赋宁(北大外语系主任),4裴克安(外交部编译室主任),6陈羽纶(《英语世界》主编),7赵萝蕤(北大英语系教授),8卞之琳(社科院外文所研究员),9沈师光(《英语世界》编辑)。

出版说明

许渊冲先生是当代翻译大家，他毕生致力于中西文化的互译工作，已经在国内外出版中、英、法文著作一百二十余部，并提出了中国学派的文学翻译理论，为我国的翻译事业以及中西方的文化交流做出了划时代的贡献。钱钟书教授曾经称赞许先生译文风格：“戴着音韵和节奏的镣铐跳舞，灵活自如，令人惊奇。”

本文集共二十七卷，重点收录了许渊冲先生中译外、外译中的翻译作品，涉及中文、英文、法文三个文种，涵盖了诗词、杂剧、散曲、哲学经典以及外国小说等。文集中收入许先生中译外的主要作品有《论语》、《道德经》、《诗经》、《楚辞》、《汉魏六朝诗选》、《唐诗三百首》、《唐五代词选》、《宋词三百首》、《元曲三百首》、《宋元明清诗选》、《西厢记》、《牡丹亭》、《长生殿》、《桃花扇》、《中国古诗词选》，外译中的主要作品有《一切为了爱情》、《水上》、《飞马腾空》、《昆廷·杜沃德》、《雨果戏剧选》、《红与黑》、《人生的开始》、《高老头》、《包法利夫人》、《哥拉·布勒尼翁》、《约翰·克里斯托夫》。另外还收录许先生珍藏的图片八十余幅。

除去翻译作品之外，许先生还有大量的文字，如学术专著、评论、散文和书信，以及许先生新近作品等，如果有条件，我们还会将《文集》接续出版。

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LAWS DIVINE
AND HUMAN

PREFACE

Li Er, the Old Master (571—500 BC), twenty years older than Confucius(551—479 BC), was a great philosopher of ancient China. His *Laws Divine and Human* of 5,000 words in 81 chapters is an influential philosophical work in the world. This book has many English translations. So far I have read four different versions, namely, *The Way and Its Power* by Arthur Waley Published in 1934, *Lao Zi the Book of Tao and Teh* published by Peking University Press in 1995, *Tao Te Ching* published by Liaoning University Press in 1996, and *the Classic of the Dao, A New Investigation* published by Foreign Languages Press in 1998. All these versions are literal translations, and the key word is phonetically transcribed as “tao” or “dao”, except for Waley who translates it as “the way”. This cannot be easily understood by the modern reader. In reality, the key word means law, divine law, natural law or truth. In the very beginning of the first chapter of his book, Lao Zi says: “The divine law may be spoken of, but it is not the common law.” By common law Lao Zi means those enforced by human beings. So we may

see the difference between divine and human laws. The divine law is objective truth which does not depend on human will for its existence, while human laws do. The former may be called natural philosophy, while the latter social philosophy. The former will not change when the latter does. That is the reason why the Old Master says that the divine law is not the common law. Based on such interpretation, I have translated the Old Master's *Laws Divine and Human* as I understand it, so that it may be easily understood by the modern reader.

What is the divine law? The Old Master says in Chapter 4 that the divine law is formless, its use is inexhaustible; it is endless, whence come all things. That is to say, the divine law is abstract, empty and formless, but it can be embodied in concrete things, so its use is inexhaustible like an unfulfillable abyss, for it is deep, bottomless, endless, boundless, whence come all concrete things. Thus we see the divine law inwardly and outwardly.

In Chapter 37 the Old Master says that the divine law will not interfere, so there is nothing it cannot do. Non-interference is an important principle of the Old Master's philosophy. Only when the law does not interfere can all

things develop freely. So the law should always be inactive so as to let all things be active. The activity of all things is the result of the law's inaction or non-interference. The law's inaction provides the condition for the activity of all things. When we say there is nothing the law cannot do, we mean that the activity of all things are the embodiment of the divine law. In Chapter 2 the Old Master says more concretely, "Therefore the sage does everything without interference, teaches everyone without persuasion, and lets everything begin uninitiated and grow unpossessed. Everything is done without being his deed, and succeeds without being his success." And the Old Master sums up in Chapter 57: "Therefore the sage says, 'If I do nothing wrong, the people will go the right way.'" Thus we see "to rule by inaction or non-interference" is an important principle of the Old Master's political philosophy.

As a result of inaction, the Old Master advocates non-contention. In Chapter 8 he says, "The highest good (virtue) is like water. Water benefits everything by giving without taking or contending. It likes the low place others dislike, so it follows closely the divine law." Here virtue is compared to water which flows to a low place without contending for a high position. Thus the virtue of non-