

An Inspection of David Collie's Misinterpretations of *The Analects*, With a Focus on the Notes

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Received 19 February 2016; accepted 13 April 2016
Published online 26 May 2016

Abstract

David Collie's translation of *The Analects* displays obvious features of Christian influence and an inclination towards the Occidental culture, which is shown by the abundant annotations in his version. Through ample examples, the author proves that Collie was limited by his identity as a Christian missionary, the historical background of the time, as well as his tunnel vision of the Oriental culture, which led to serious distortions of the original work and misinterpretations of Confucianism. The problems can be classified into three major types. i.e. unfair criticisms of Confucius' teachings, far-fetched allusions to Christianity and intentional propagations of Western culture. However, seen from another perspective, the biased interpretations may serve to illuminate and enrich the original in the hermeneutic sense, and are likely to inspire further and deeper reflections on the classical text, esp. in the context of cross-cultural communication.

Key words: David Collie; Translation of *The Analects*; Misinterpretations; Causes and effects

Zhang, X. X. (2016). An Inspection of David Collie's Misinterpretations of *The Analects*, With a Focus on the Notes. *Canadian Social Science*, 12(5), 1-8. Available from: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/css/article/view/8455>
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/8455>

INTRODUCTION

Pre-Qin era (i.e. the period before 221B.C. when the first emperor of Qin dynasty unified China) is the incubation

and formative stage of Chinese traditional thoughts and culture. The ancient books and records passed down from that period represent the quintessence of brilliant Chinese culture and tradition, among which Confucius' *Analects* is a highly recognized and most influential work. According to historical records, the first full-text English translation of *The Analects* was done by the English missionary David Collie and published in 1828. Over the one hundred and eighty more years up to now, various English versions of *The Analects* appeared overseas. As shown by sketchy statistics, there are already over forty full-text English translations of *The Analects*, which play a positive role in spreading traditional Chinese thoughts around the world, and in promoting cultural exchanges between the east and the west.

Among translators of English versions of *The Analects*, there are sinologists, Chinese scholars at home and abroad, western missionaries, philosophers, men of letters, historians, common people who have a zest and ardent love for Chinese culture, etc. However, early renderings of *The Analects* were mostly done by missionaries who functioned as the major force for disseminating Confucian culture to the outside world at an early stage.

Translation, in a sense, means interpretation, which is directly or indirectly influenced by the translator's cultural background, social status, level of education, values, life experiences, purpose and motivation, as well as some other factors. The translator, as it was, would participate in textual construction and perform a sort of rewriting on the basis of a source text for target readers, which may lead to either enrichment and improvement of the original, or distortion and misinterpretation of it. As an inevitable phenomenon in interpretation of ancient works and in cross-cultural communication, it is extremely true for translation of *The Analects*, an age-old book of profound thoughts and concise words.

The Analects is a collection of sayings and ideas attributed to the Chinese philosopher Confucius (551B.C.-

479B.C.) and his contemporaries, traditionally believed to have been written by Confucius' followers. It is both difficult and easy to read. Easy, because each passage is relatively short. Difficult, because there's no obvious logic connecting one passage with another. *The Analects* seem to be something less than a coherent whole and they can even give the appearance of being fragmentary, disconnected, and, occasionally, in conflict with each other. Meanwhile, as a philosophical work with moralistic lessons, it involves many culture-specific information related to Chinese history and tradition, and therefore poses great challenge to translators who endeavor to reach a truthful, accurate as well as elegant rendering of the masterwork.

Since western missionaries grow up in the soil of Western culture, their understanding and interpretation of Confucius' teachings often reflect western cultural concern. They translate for a special religious purpose, i.e. to demonstrate how Chinese holy texts forecast Christian divinity. Therefore, they tend to use concepts from western philosophy and culture to interpret Chinese morals and ethics, and western philosophical and theological assumptions are very often implied in their versions. Typical western type of discourse and views infiltrate into their translations, which endow the ancient Chinese work with an alien touch and occidental color.

In view of the significant status of Christianity in Chinese culture and ideology, missionary translators regard learning, translation and introduction of the Confucian classic as an important aspect of their religious undertaking. On the one hand, with an intimate knowledge of Chinese traditional culture and Chinese way of thinking and behavior, they can become mentally armed, so as to better educate and moralize their people. On the other hand, they demonstrate the superiority and universality of Christianity by substituting Christian principles and ideas for the instructions of Confucius intentionally or unintentionally, which leads to diverse forms of misinterpretation of *The Analects*.

Among the full-text English versions of *The Analects* published overseas, there are four major missionary translations, done respectively by David Collie (?-1828), James Legge (1815-1897), William Jennings (unknown) and William Soothill (1861-1935). In these missionary renderings, the author has discerned some inevitable cultural and religious bias towards the original, which is especially evident in David Collie's version.

1. DAVID COLLIE'S TRANSLATION AND PROBLEMS

The English missionary David Collie arrived at Malacca in 1822 and followed Robert Morrison (1782-1834,

English missionary) to learn Chinese. Since 1824, he served as president of Ying Wa College¹ till his death, and in 1828, he published *The Chinese Classical Work Commonly Called the Four Books*, which is probably the earliest version of *The Four Books*². Before him, Joshua Marshman (1768-1837), an Englishman who did missionary work in India published the first volume of *The Works of Confucius, Containing the Original Text, with a Translation* in 1809 which contains his translation of the first ten chapters of Confucius analects. But Marshman did not translate the rest later on. So Collie's translation becomes literally the first full English version of *The Analects*; it deserves our attention.

An important feature of Collie's translation lies in the seemingly omnipresent annotations. After a faithful literal translation of the original, Collie would often provide a relevant note with detailed information; in addition, he may supplement one or two more tips of explanation or comment. Sometimes, he criticizes ideas in the analects almost severely; sometimes, he tends to interpret the original message in a religious way; sometimes, he introduces cultural background, makes comparisons and gives comment on cultural differences, with the purpose of advocating western culture and showing the superiority of Christianity. The notes in Collie's translation are of great research value and offer a particular angle for studying deeply into the missionary versions of Confucianism.

Consulting the authoritative and classic Chinese annotations of *The Analects* provided by Zhu (1983) and Yang (2009), with a careful reading and examination of the notes, we find three types of faults involved in David Collie's interpretation of *The Analects*, which can be classified as follows.

1.1 Unfair Criticisms of Confucius' Teachings

In some notes, the translator straightly denounces or shows disapproval of ideas in *The Analects* from the western point of view, which is largely limited by his cultural and religious stance. The criticisms are often partial and narrow, incapably of giving an objective description or fair assessment of the Confucian philosophy. Here are some examples.

¹ Also referred to as YWC, Anglo-Chinese College (Chinese: 英華書院) is a direct subsidised boys' secondary school in Kowloon, Hong Kong. It was established in Malacca in 1818 by the first Protestant missionary to China, Rev. Robert Morrison. In 1843, the college was moved to Hong Kong. The College Deed, signed in 1821, stated that the objective of the school was the reciprocal cultivation of English and Chinese literature as well as the diffusion of Christianity (Chinese: 促進中西方學術交流, 並廣傳基督福音). These aims remain today in the context of a very different world.

² The Four Books (Chinese: 四書; pinyin: Sishū) are Chinese classic texts illustrating the core value and belief systems in Confucianism. They were selected by Zhu Xi in the Song dynasty to serve as general introduction to Confucian thought, and they were, in the Ming and Qing dynasties, made the core of the official curriculum for the civil service examinations.

Example 1

子曰：“孟之反不伐，奔而殿，将入门，策其马，曰‘非敢后也，马不进也。’”雍也篇，6.13)

Translation: Confucius said, Mung Che Fan did not boast of his merits. When the army fled he was in the rear, but as they approached the gate he beat his horse and said it is not that I dared to be in the rear but my horse would not advance.

Note: When an army is put to flight, to be in the rear is considered meritorious. Ming Che Fan, when the army of Loo was defeated by the troops of Tse, although he remained in the rear, endeavoring to repel the enemy, yet when the flying troops approached the city, so that all eyes could see him beat his horse, calling out, that it was not his courage that kept him in the rear, but the laziness, or feebleness of his horse. In this he showed his modesty, and exhibited a pattern of humility which ought to be imitated.

Further note: The student ought to reflect that this soldier violated truth in order to manifest his humility. He told a direct falsehood, which is accounted a heavy crime in the sight of the God of truth. His humility ought to be imitated, but his disregard to truth, ought to be abhorred, and Confucius in recommending the one as an example to his disciples, ought to have warned them against imitating the other: but it is but too evident, that the sage himself, had little idea how abominable the sin of lying is in the eyes of the God of truth (Collie, p.23).

Comment: Confucius meant to praise Mung Che Fan for his humility and unpretentiousness. But the translator regards Mung as a liar offending the God of truth. He even rebukes Confucius for failing to realize and point out this sin, and asks Confucius' disciples to look at this example in a critical manner. So we see a clash of cultures and beliefs between the east and the west here.

To the Chinese, humility is a great virtue, even though it, by habitual understatement, often means violation of truth. But in the eyes of a westerner, especially a Christian, lying is a felony and offence to God, which, in whatever situation, should be avoided.

Example 2

叶公语孔子曰：“吾党有直躬者，其父攘羊，而子证之。”孔子曰：“吾党之直者异于是。父为子隐，子为父隐，直在其中矣。”(子路篇，13.18)

Translation: The Governor of Yih conversing with Confucius said, in my village there is a truly upright man. His father stole a sheep and he proved the theft. Confucius said, the upright in my village, differ from this. The father conceals the faults of the son, and the son those of the father: uprightness lies in this!

Note: That the father and son should conceal each others faults are in the highest degree accordant with divine reason, and the nature of man.

Further note: This principle is good, to a certain extent, and if carried so far as to defeat the ends of public

justice, it is pernicious, and must be abandoned by every truly upright man (Collie, 1828, p.61).

Comment: Confucius resorted to an example of a father and son who concealed each others' faults to demonstrate what "uprightness" should mean in his neighborhood. However, according to the translator, though to some extent, such kind of uprightness conforms to divine reason and the nature of man, harboring crimes are against justice and injurious to other people. Therefore, a truly upright man should abhor such behavior. Here, based on the western standard, the translator judges and criticizes the connivance acquiesced by Confucius, and points out the limit of uprightness in Confucian sense. Again, we see how people from different cultural backgrounds can see things differently. But the translator's comment fails to mention the relevant Chinese value and tradition, which can mislead readers to a false reading and understanding of Confucius' teaching. Chinese people uphold principles of filial piety and family harmony. Stealing a sheep is not a serious crime, which can be handled and discussed within the family. The son's conviction would definitely make the father feel disgraced, and therefore spoil the relationship between them. So, Confucius would favor the other way of solving this matter, after weighing up the gain and loss carefully. This case can also be explained by a popular Chinese proverb 'Don't wash one's dirty linen in public'(家丑不可外扬) which means domestic shame should not be made public.

Example 3

孺悲欲见孔子，孔子辞以疾。将命者出户，取瑟而歌，使之闻之。(阳货篇，17.20)

Translation: Joo Pei wished to have an interview with the sage, the latter refused to grant it, on the ground of being sick, but as soon as the bearer of this message went out, the sage took his harp and played that Joo might hear him.

Note: Joo Pei, had been a student of the sage, but must have committed some misdemeanor, hence the sage deeply reproved him by this refusal.

Further note: Pray what moral renovation could be this palpable falsehood effect on the beholder, or upon the reader of this barefaced lie! Does heaven thus deceive men! Truly such a man was a worthy compeer to the God of eternal and inviolable truth! It had been much better that the sage had not spoken at all, then what he should by his example encourage his admirers in a hateful practice, which if not deeply repented of, and pardoned through the atonement of Jesus, must be punished with everlasting woe. Is it in imitation of the sage that the Chinese of the present day distinguish themselves by telling falsehoods? (Ibid., p.86)

Comment: The translator disapproves Confucius' act of refusal to see his student by way of lying, which he thinks may cause adverse effect on ordinary people. Confucius is a sage comparable to God, but God never

lies or cheats men. So if the sage does not repent such deception and pray for God's mercy, he would suffer eternal accusation and punishment. The translator even sharply and severely questions whether Chinese people have learned the tricks of cheating and lying from their revered sage. The translator merely looked at the case from the Christian point of view, and failed to see Confucius' purpose here. The sage, by his refusal, wanted to let the student know that the teacher was angry and dissatisfied with his misdemeanor. In fact, Confucius didn't hide the fabricated excuse of being sick, as he played the harp to let the student hear. So we would say, it is the sage's art of education; only the translator hasn't understood it in the correct way.

1.2 Far-Fetched Allusions to Christianity

In some notes, the translator draws farfetched analogies between Confucianism and Christianity, and misinterprets ideas and concepts in *The Analects* from the Christian point of view, which distorts the original messages to a great extent.

Example 4

子曰：“朝闻道，夕死可矣。”（里仁篇，4.8）

Translation: Confucius says, if in the morning you hear divine truth, in the evening you may die.

Note: Divine principles are of the utmost importance to every man; if in the morning a man hear, understand, and firmly believe them, then in the evening he may die without regret.

Further note: It is the glory of the everlasting gospel, that the moment a man sincerely believes its sacred principles, and with his whole heart relies on that Almighty Saviour which it reveals, that moment he is pardoned and justified in the sight of God the Judge of all the earth. But as the meritorious cause of his justification, is neither his knowledge, nor belief of the gospel, but the merits of the Divine Saviour, to whom his gospel directs his mind, it does not appear how the mere hearing and believing of the doctrines of the Chinese sages, which reveals no Saviour, could prepare a man for that awful change which he undergoes at death...Had Confucius heard the gospel of Jesus, is it not likely that he would have joyfully embraced it? (Ibid., p.13)

Comment: “Tao” (道) in Confucius' original sense denotes truth, principles, beliefs, and the meaning of life, instead of holy doctrines. Yet the translator understands it as *The Gospels of God*, and contends that only when a person devoutly believes in God's order and relies on God whole-heartedly, can he be pardoned and saved on the point of death. He further argues that merely following the teachings of Confucius cannot help people face death calmly and without regret. If the sage had the opportunity to hear the gospels of Jesus, he would have joyfully embraced it. Obviously, the translator has deviated from the original too far. Not only has he Christianized the concept of “Tao”, but he tried

to advocate Christianity by implying that Confucian philosophy is inferior to Christian creeds. The note manifests the translator's ignorance of Confucianism, and displays his contempt of traditional Chinese culture. It is similar to James Legg, another missionary translator of *The Analects*, who openly denounced ‘the error of not regarding Confucius as a religious teacher’ by explaining some common notions in Chinese characters such as Ti (天-heaven or sky), shih (神-spirits), kwei (鬼-ghosts), pu kwa (卜卦-divination) in a religious way (Legg, 1880, pp.4-16). So how can we expect the translator with such cultural attitude and religious bias to honestly and truthfully convey the oriental wisdom of Confucius?

Example 5

子曰：“知之者不如好之者，好之者不如乐之者。”（雍也篇，6.18）

Translation: Confucius said, he who knows right principles, is not equal to him who loves them, nor is he who loves them, equal to him who delights in them.

Note: Chang King Foo says, the thing may be thus illustrated, to know the five kinds of grain, is to know that they may be eaten, to love them, is to eat and relish them; to delight in them, is to eat and be satisfied. To know, and not to love good principles, shows that knowledge is not complete, to love and not delight in them, shows that love is not perfect.

Further note: These remarks are perfectly correct, and apply admirably to the doctrines of divine revelation. There is a superficial, speculative knowledge of these principles, which is not productive of love to them, and there is a sort of love, or partial approving of them, which is unaccompanied by genuine delight in truth; but when divine truth is clearly and spiritually understood, it must be loved, and when loved, it must prove a source of the purest and most reliable delight (Collie, 1828, p.24).

Comment: Here, Confucius discusses in general the difference between knowing, loving and taking delight in things, but the translator limits the subject to people's perception and loving of divine revelation and religious truth. Clearly, the meaning of the original message is narrowed down with an intentional connection to Christian belief. Confucius' utterance actually conveys a universal truth that is applicable to all sorts of experiences in life; whereas the translator's inadequate interpretation depreciates the wit of the sage.

Example 6

子曰：“禹，吾无间然矣。菲饮食而致孝乎鬼神，恶衣服而致美乎黻冕；卑宫室而尽力乎沟洫。禹，吾无间然矣。”（泰伯篇，8.21）

Translation: Confucius said, I see no flaw (crevice) in the character of Yu. His food was coarse, but his sacrifices in the hall of ancestors, full and rich—his common apparel was mean, but his sacrificial robes, and cap were finely adorned - he lived in a mean palace, but exhausted

his strength, in making ditches and water courses (for the good of the people). I see no defect in Yu.

Note: Yu, the successor of Shun, is said to have been employed by that Emperor to drain the Empire after the deluge, so as to carry off the overplus of water. Such was his zeal in this highly meritorious work, that during the eight years in which he attended to it, although he passed his own door three times, he did not enter.

Further note: Some are of the opinion—that the flood here referred to, which took place according to Chinese Chronology about 2200 years before Christ, is the same as that recorded by Moses, and that Noah and Yu are one and the same person. The student who is acquainted with Chinese and old Testament History, will find some points of resemblance between the Chinese flood, and that recorded in the sacred volume, and likewise between Noah and Yu; but whether there be sufficient grounds to identify those persons and events, we shall not take upon us to decide (Ibid., p.36).

Comment: The translator refers to the story of the ancient King Yu combating the flood, too busy to go home — Yu is said to have passed by his own house many times without entering it. He especially mentions the association of the flood to that recorded by Moses, and the opinion of seeing Yu and Noah as the same person. Although there may be a vast many similarities between the Chinese flood and the one recorded in *The Old Testament*, and likewise between Noah and Yu, such type of connection still seems implausible and not well-grounded, remaining merely a subjective assumption of some people. Yu, an eminent leader in ancient Chinese history and a great ancestor honored by Chinese descendants, is falsely portrayed by the translator with an equivocal reference to Noah.

1.3 Intentional Propagation of Western Culture

In some notes, the translator tries to instill western culture and Christian principles with a condescending attitude. To him, Western culture is superior and Christianity excels Confucianism. So he maneuvered translation of *The Analects* into a means of preaching Christian values and disseminating western ideology. In his comments on cultural differences, a sense of arrogance and assertiveness naturally reveals.

Example 7

子曰：“不仁者不可以久处约，不可以长处乐。仁者安仁，知者利仁。”(里仁篇，4.2)

Translation: Confucius says, those who are destitute of virtue, can not long conduct themselves aright either in poverty or affliction, nor can they long manage themselves in the midst of prosperity, (or pleasure), but the virtuous find repose in virtue, and the intelligent earnestly covet virtue.

Note: Man's heart is originally perfectly virtuous; he who preserves his original rectitude, is unmoved by external circumstances, but he who loses it, if in poor and distressing circumstances, will give way to low and

irregular feelings. If on the other hand, he lives in ease and affluence, he will indulge in every sort of extravagance and vicious pleasure. The truly virtuous man is perfectly free from selfishness and partiality, hence his love and hatred are constantly guided by reason.

Further note: The same experience proves that the heart of man is naturally “deceitful, above all things and desperately wicked,” and that genuine virtue is not a plant which springs naturally in the soil of human nature, but is “a tree of our heavenly Father's planting.” (Ibid., p.12)

Comment: In this example, the translator tries to propagate western views on human nature by proposing two important notions: “**Man's heart is originally perfectly virtuous**”, and **genuine virtue is ‘a tree of our heavenly Father's planting’**”. Moreover, the translator points out the significant influence of “**reason**” on human affections, which accords with the western tradition of rationalism. Actually, in the later part of the same Chapter, there's another note for “性相近也，习相远也” (“by nature we are nearly equal, but by education very different”), in which the translator emphasizes again that “in the original nature of man, as to its moral qualities there is no difference. All having a nature perfectly virtuous” (阳货篇17.2, Collie, 1828, p.83).

Example 8

子曰：“饭疏食饮水，曲肱而枕之，乐亦在其中矣。不义而富且贵，于我如浮云。”(述而篇，7.15)

Translation: Confucius says, coarse rice for food, water for drink, and one's bended arm for a pillow, even in the midst of these, there is happiness; but riches and honors, gained by injustice are to me light as the fleeting cloud.

Note: Mere heathen philosophy has in all ages, and in all countries taught men, that happiness is found not in riches and honors, but in virtue. But the hopes and prospects, as well as the principles and practice of the genuine Christian, being far more pure and elevated, than that of the most eminent heathen sages, his happiness in the midst of poverty and affliction must of necessity be far more solid and satisfactory. The one can look forward with humble confidence to a glorious immortality, while to the other the future is enveloped in a gloomy uncertainty (Collie, 1828, p.29).

Comment: The translator calls philosophers of different times and from different countries (including Confucius) ‘heathen sages’, and considers that Christian beliefs and principles, which **honor poverty and suffering as prerequisites of human happiness**, are purer and nobler than any other popular heathen philosophy. By saying this, he actually eulogizes the excellence of Christianity, like a sort of sermon. From John 16:33 of King James Bible: “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: But be of good cheer;

I have overcome the world.” —Jesus’ words before he was put onto the cross meant to comfort his disciples. Only when people face an ordeal will they reflect on the meaning of life; only when they know God through misery can their sufferings become a source of happiness. So affliction enables people to see the glory and supreme power of God, and helps them realize their true need. By this note, the translator preaches Christian tenets.

Example 9

子不语怪, 力, 乱, 神. (述而篇, 7.20)

Translation: Confucius did not speak of extraordinary feats of strength, nor of rebellion, nor of the gods.

Note: Thus it appears by the confession of the sage’s own disciples, that his doctrines were confined to the concerns of this transitory life, and left man to grope in midnight darkness, as to the awfully momentous concerns of eternity. If there be a Supreme Ruler, it is of the utmost importance, that we the subjects of his government, be acquainted with his character and laws. Without this knowledge how shall we know, how to honor and serve him, or by what method shall we discover how we may regain his favour, which by disobedience to his will, we have lost. A knowledge of these infinitely important points, must be essentially necessary to the happiness of man, but in vain do we search the writings of Confucius, nor of any other Chinese sage for the slightest hint on the subject. Let us then turn from these to that book where we find “life and immortality brought clearly to light.” (Ibid., p.29)

Comment: The translator blames Confucius’ doctrines and other classical Chinese philosophies for they are limited to secular concern, with no regard to subjects of “eternity” and ‘immortality’. He points out that, to realize the existence of the “supreme ruler”, know him, respect him, obey his order, serve him and then enjoy his favor are essential to human happiness. Here, he is actually preaching the doctrine of salvation in Christianity which asserts immortality of the soul. **The greatest promise from God is to grant his people eternal life, and Christians are to enjoy a brand new life of immortality in God’s land** after the experience of death and resurrection, where no suffering, death or disaster exists.

2. CAUSES OF COLLIE’S MISINTERPRETATIONS

Based on the above analyses and discussion of problems in David Collie’s translation, we endeavor to explore the causes of his misinterpretations and decide upon three major reasons as follows.

First of all, misinterpretations are unavoidable in translation as a result of differences between source and target languages and cultures, as well as the subjective involvement of the translator. As the renowned Chinese

scholar Qian Zhongshu has mentioned, there are three types of ‘distance’ in translation which may lead to various mistakes and perverted interpretations of the original:

一国文字和另一国文字之间必然有距离, 译者的理解和文风跟原作品的内容和形式之间也不会没有距离, 而且译者的体会和自己的表达能力之间还时常有距离. ...因此, 译文总有失真和走样的地方, 在意义或口吻上违背或不很贴合原文. 那就是“讹”, 西洋谚语所谓“翻译者即叛逆者”.

Distance inevitably exists between languages of different countries, between translator’s understanding and literary style and the content and form of the original work, between translator’s reading comprehension ability and his ability of expression... Therefore, translation undeniably entails distortion and deviation either in sense or in tone which we call “error”, and in the west, they say the “translator is the traitor” (Traduttore traditore). (Qian, 2002, p.78)

There’s a further discussion about two types of “error”: the first are careless mistakes made by the translator, due to his limited vision, inadequate understanding of the original and deficient language proficiency; the second are intentional violations of the translator who tries in translation to revise the original and reproduce on purpose. The careless mistakes are hard to be eliminated, while the limit of intentional violations depends on the translator’s measure and judgment. Collie’s problems involve both careless mistakes and intentional violations. As a translator, his perceptions are affected by his other identities as an Englishman and as a missionary. More often than not, he would adapt the version to suit the taste and demand of English readers, providing them with a familiar and delightful reading experience. Concepts and ideas specific to Chinese culture and tradition are likely to pose obstacle to the readers’ understanding. So the translator’s strategy is to explain them in the notes, where he either leveled criticisms against Confucius’ views or made comments on Confucius’ teachings from the western point of view. As a missionary, he has an additional purpose, that is, to lead the Chinese who studied English in the College “to reflect seriously on some of the fatal errors propagated by their most celebrated sages”, and he hoped that the notes and remarks “may, by the divine blessing, prove useful to some of the deluded heathen who read the translation”, whereas the Christian “will see abundant reason to be grateful that he has been taught a ‘More excellent way’.” (Collie, 1828, pp.i-ii)

Secondly, the translator’s way of interpretation is also determined by the socio-political-economical situation of the time. As Lefevere has said, “Translations are not made in a vacuum. Translators function in a given culture at a given time. The way they understand themselves and their culture is one of the factors that may

influence the way in which they translate.” (Lefevere, 2004, p.14) He further pointed out that if “a certain culture considers itself ‘central’ with regard to other cultures, it is likely to treat the texts produced by those cultures in the rather cavalier manner.” (Ibid., p.70)

Collie’s misinterpretations of Confucius are closely related to the particular historical background, when there was a great disparity between the east and the west in political, economic and military strength. China, in the late Qing dynasty, was in a disadvantaged position, so western scholars pose themselves as cultural superiors, trying to reform Confucianism and attribute the Chinese philosophy to the universal system of Christianity. They also want to draw on Confucian doctrines to show the legitimacy of Christian belief, which results in a rather biased version of *The Analects* permeated with western ideology and Christian views.

Thirdly, misinterpretation in translation is justified by the hermeneutic motion of “aggression” from George Steiner who attempted to project the translator into the activity of translating and described translation as a movement through four stages, viz. initiative trust, aggression, incorporation and restitution (Steiner, 2001, pp.312-316). The translator is depicted as an aggressive figure who both plunders and imposes. He first willingly approaches the original, takes something, absorbs it, and finally offers something of his own. The acts of assimilation and later compensation indicate subjective manipulation. The highly-motivated translator actively participates in the process of understanding the source first and then recreating it in another language and culture system. The translator acquires from the original and at the same time contributes something of his own to the original, as any piece of translation is inevitably based upon a source and represents a partial interpretation of the translator.

In 1972, the American scholar Herbert Fingarette published a book entitled *Confucius: The Secular as Sacred* which is quite influential in the research field of Confucianism. In the preface of the book, Fingarette extolled contributions and accomplishments of the missionaries who translated and introduced Confucian doctrines to the west, but criticized them for failing to produce a neutral version untainted by their stereotyped religious views. Actually, missionary translations suggest a way to understand Confucianism, though in all probability, incomplete and limited. Collie’s explanations and comments offer a dissimilar perspective for us to look at the Chinese sage and his teachings in a critical manner. It can be a different voice to the mainstream compliment and echoes. The misinterpretations also illuminate problems of cultural clash and religious bias in cross-cultural communication. According to Steiner’s view, in translation, “[t]here has been an outflow of energy from the source and an inflow into the receptor

altering both and altering the harmonics of the whole system.” (Ibid., p.318) Such kind of energy flow can be an enrichment of both the source and the target sides, which, though unanticipated, is still welcome. By studying the way how Collie understood and presented the ancient Chinese sage, we may get a clue and look back in turn at the western and Christian outlooks and their limitations, which result in valuable insights and uncommon findings.

CONCLUSION

David Collie’s translation of *The Analects* isn’t among the most popular and prestigious versions, but it is the first full English version, and thus deserves our due attention and close study. A careful examination of the text shows that the translation itself lacks distinction, but the abundant notes turn out to be revealing and thought-provoking. They serve a rich resource for us to inspect how westerners, esp. English missionaries, looked at our sacred work of Confucianism, from which we summarize that their misinterpretations are both accidental and inevitable.

Since human beings are born subjective, they’d never work like a camera, factually and accurately portray a picture in a detached and impersonal manner. In the case of translation, the translator’s interpretation of the original always represents his own way of understanding, which is, more often than not, partial to a more or less degree. His views are limited and influenced by his life experiences, social status, beliefs and values, education, personality, etc. Some external factors as the historical background and mainstream ideology also affect his way of thinking and the choice of strategy in translation. According to polysystem theory, the literary traditions generally perceive the translated texts as a cultural intruder, a carrier of foreign values to that particular cultural system. When a culture is stable and self-sufficient, translated literature holds a peripheral position and imported items have to be presented as compatible with the indigenous tradition for acceptability (Even-Zohar, 1979). Then the target acceptability-oriented strategies are most likely used, as how Collie dealt with *The Analects*, trying to eliminate elements of cultural clash, interpret Confucian views in a way that suits the western context and therefore make the sage’s teachings more approachable for the English people. But is it really what the readers want? Probably no. As Eugene A. Nida has pointed out, we should actually believe that “the people of any language-culture have sufficient imagination and experience to understand how the people of another language-culture may rightly differ in their behavior and values” (Nida, 2001, p.79).

Translation can be seen as a violent and brutal plunder of the original. It may become a form of encroachment

that the “superior” culture forces upon the “weak” culture, while the translator plays the role of an actual practitioner who in his translation may recreate and rewrite the original as he sees fit. This type of manipulation indisputably means a degree of loss. However, Bassnett (2004, p.36) argued that “the translator can at times enrich or clarify the SL text as a direct result of the translation process. Moreover, what is often seen as ‘lost’ from the SL context may be replaced in the TL context....” When Collie borrowed Confucian doctrines to verify the legitimacy and universality of Christianity, and to propagate western culture, readers lost the chance to grasp the true and whole essence of Confucianism and failed to appreciate the great Chinese philosophy in all its brilliance. Chinese conventions and ethics were deliberately incorporated into the western cultural and religious system, and the translated text was imprinted with discernible features of western ideology. By liberally adapting Chinese philosophies to collude with western stereotypes, the translator invented a “fake” Chinese culture that is more palatable to the mainstream, but the perversions obviously signify a kind of “loss”.

On the other hand, however, Collie’s version still occupies a position in the whole repertory of translated works of *The Analects*, and it manifests the wide adaptability of Confucius’ teachings. It helps us read *The Analects* in a broader context of cross-cultural communication, and we do subsequent introspections to reach a more thorough and adequate understanding of Confucianism—one of our most cherished cultural heritages. Besides, biased interpretations actually suggest diversity in understanding, though not in an expected and desirable way. So, in the liberal sense, we may regard any

piece of translation, including Collie’s interpretation of *The Analects*, as an enrichment of the original.

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