

A Study on James Legge's English Translation of *Lun Yu*

UNE ETUDE SUR LA TRADUCTION DES *ENTRETIENS DE CONFUCIUS* DE JAMES LEGGE

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Abstract: *Lun Yu*, a masterpiece of ancient Chinese philosophy, is among the most influential books in Chinese history. Legge's English translation of *Lun Yu* has stood the test of time, distinguished as the standard work by which subsequent translations of the classics have been judged. The most remarkable quality of Legge's version is its faithfulness in content, owing to Legge's scholarly industry and keen perception of the original. Legge ensured a comprehension of Confucianism from his readership which is similar to the general Chinese interpretation. In spite of some referential and pragmatic inaccuracy, any careful, patient and judicious Western reader is able to perceive Confucius' key concepts (Ren, Li, etc.), and his ethical, political, philosophical and educational thoughts through Legge's translation. Legge had made a great contribution to the introduction of Confucianism and the Chinese culture to the West.

Key words: *Lun Yu*; Legge; translation; faithfulness

Résumé: Les Entretiens de Confucius, le chef-d'œuvre de la philosophie de la Chine ancienne, est parmi les livres les plus influents de l'histoire chinoise. La traduction anglaise des Entretiens de Confucius de Legge a résisté à l'épreuve du temps, distingué comme le standard de travail par lequel les traductions ultérieures des classiques ont été jugées. La qualité la plus remarquable de la version de Legge est sa fidélité dans le contenu, grâce au savoir érudit de Legge et sa perception aiguë de l'original. Legge a assuré une compréhension du confucianisme de son lectorat, qui est similaire à l'interprétation générale chinoise. En dépit de certaines imprécisions référentielles et pragmatiques, tous les lecteurs occidentaux attentifs, patients et judicieux sont capables de percevoir les concepts clés de Confucius (Ren, Li, etc), et son éthique, ses pensées politiques, philosophiques et pédagogiques à travers la

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traduction de Walter Legge. Legge avait apporté une grande contribution à l'introduction du confucianisme et de la culture chinoise à l'Occident.

Mots-cles : Entretiens de Confucius; traduction; fidélité

1. INTRODUCTION

Confucianism represents the way of life of the Chinese people for over 2,000 years. Confucius (551-479B.C.), the founder of Confucianism, is considered as one of the most predominant figures in the history of human thought, a pioneering educator, social critic, and political scientist. The collection known as *Lun Yu* is among the most influential books in history, a masterpiece of ancient Chinese philosophy as well as a basic sourcebook for a wide range of advice on human affairs, from administering countries and undertaking enterprises, to dealing with social problems and getting along with friends, to maintaining the family and mastering oneself.

The influence of Confucianism is not confined to China. It can also be found in the culture of neighboring countries, such as Korea, Japan and Vietnam. The introduction of Confucianism to the West began in the early 17th century. The first work of translation from the Confucian literature is a book entitled *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus, sive Scientia Sinensis*, which was published in Paris by four Jesuit missionaries in the year of 1687. Special attention was paid to these texts and study on Confucianism has never stopped ever since. There are a number of outstanding admirers of Confucianism in Europe including Gottfried Leibniz, Voltaire, Goethe, Alexander Pope and Charles Lamb, among whom the French writer, Voltaire, is the typical example. He was enchanted by the moral code of Confucius and wrote his own play *Orphelin de la Chine* in 1755 by employing the theme of the Chinese drama *Orphan of the Zhao Family*, describing it as “the Morals of Confucius in five acts”.

The translation of Confucian classics is indispensable for the introduction of Confucianism to the West. Among these classics *Lun Yu* is the earliest and most reliable source on the life and teachings of Confucius and is regarded as the basic scripture of Confucianism. The history of the translation of *Lun Yu* is as long as over 300 years. The first English version was published in 1828 in Malacca by David Collie. James Legge's version appeared in 1861. During the following years of more than one hundred, dozens of new English versions have been produced. The translators include the famous ones in history, such as W.E. Soothill, Arthur Waley, Ezra Pond, D.C. Lau and Ku Hungming. However, Legge's version has stood the test of time, distinguished as the standard work by which subsequent translations of the classics have been judged. Its faithfulness and peculiar characteristics have motivated the author of this thesis to single it out for special study.

2. ABOUT *LUN YU* AND JAMES LEGGE

2.1 About *Lun Yu* and Its English Translation

Among Confucian classics, *Lun Yu* distinguishes itself as the earliest and most reliable source, which has been passed down to us today, on the life and teachings of Confucius. It consists of about 500 short pieces, generally known in English as chapters although they are rarely more than a few lines long. They are organized into twenty books, the contents of which are sometimes loosely described as the sayings of Confucius.

The Chinese character *Lun* means “to deliberate upon and discuss”, and *Yu* means “to narrate by way of reply”. Thus the title means “discussed sayings” or “digested conversations”. James Legge first translated it into “Confucian Analects”. From then on, this translation has been widely adopted, which has proved Legge's keen insight into this great Chinese classic. “Analects” is a good translation of *Lun*

Yu — literally “discourses” — because it comes from the Greek “analekta” which has the meaning of “leftovers after a feast”. It is probably the case that these literary “leftovers” were assembled and edited by a congress of Confucius’ disciples shortly after his death, who concluded that a very special person had walked among them, and that his way — what he said and did — should be preserved for future generations.

Lun Yu is written in “the formal classical (wen yan) style that is characterized by such extreme brevity and compactness that every character must be weighed to discern the meaning. Single characters are also capable of conveying such a wide variety in their interpretations of a given text.” (Encyclopedia Britannica, 1933, p.1105). Moreover, in the brief chapters of *Lun Yu*, passages often lack contexts, which are difficult to interpret and are sometimes quite ambiguous. Therefore, it is not easy to be sure that one has arrived at the best understanding of it.

Just as it is difficult to translate *Lun Yu* into modern Chinese, it is far more difficult to translate it into English, a language so different from Chinese. The basic problem is the difficulty of understanding the original. What a translator requires is not only a good command of classical Chinese but also a wide knowledge of the oriental philosophy since *Lun Yu* is basically a philosophical work filled with profound philosophical thoughts and terms which are hard to comprehend. What’s more, one concept in the book may have different meanings in different contexts, and this adds to the difficulty of understanding. Another barrier is the difficulty in expression. First, because of the radical difference in concepts between the Chinese and the English language, there are cases when it’s very hard to find the equivalent in translation. Second, in Chinese, especially in ancient Chinese, some contents as well as some constituents are often omitted, so the translator has to add both the missing contents and the missing syntactic functions (subjects, objects, predicates, modifiers, complements, etc.) or word classes (verbs, prepositions, pronouns, articles, conjunctions, etc.) in order to meet the rules of the English language. In addition, *Lun Yu* is also characterized by its rich idioms and aphorisms, the vivid images of which are extremely difficult to preserve.

2.2 About James Legge (1815—1897)

James Legge is called by later Sinologists “the immortal genius of the great master.” (Ride, 1960, p.24) He is the forerunner to translate Chinese classics systematically into English, among which *The Confucian Analects* is one of the best.

Legge was born in Aberdeenshire of Scotland in 1815. In 1839 he was sent by London Missionary Society to Malacca and was appointed Principal of Anglo-Chinese College, a school for training Chinese preachers. With the signing of Nan Jing Treaty, Legge moved the college to Hong Kong where he actually began his career. In order to qualify himself for the duties of his position, he began eagerly to study the Chinese classics and translate them into English. After years of hard work, his unusual resolution and academic attainments enabled him to complete the translations of *The Four Books* and *The Five King*, altogether entitled *The Chinese Classics*. Legge supplemented his masterful translations with an enormous amount of auxiliary material, including very complete introductions, thorough annotations, indices, partial concordances, and the complete Chinese texts in a most convenient format. That’s why his translation of the Chinese classics is regarded as “the English classic of Sinology and has helped train several generations of Western Scholars”. (Paper, 1984, p.35) In 1873, Legge left Hong Kong and three years later, he became the first Professor of Chinese at Oxford. He died in 1897.

It has been over a hundred years since Legge’s versions of the Chinese classics came to the world, during which they won high praise by the Sinologists all over the world. Legge studied the Chinese classics in a way befitting a wise Chinese scholar rather than a prejudiced British missionary. The most outstanding characteristic of Legge’s translation is its faithfulness to the original. Legge wrote in his preface to *The Chinese Classics* (Vol. I) that “he thought indeed at one time of recasting the whole version in a terser and more pretentious style. He determined, however, on reflection to let it stand as it first occurred to him, his object having always been faithfulness to the original Chinese rather than grace of composition, not that he is indifferent to the value of an elegant and idiomatic rendering in the language of the translation, and he hopes that he was able to combine in a considerable degree

3. A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON THE SOURCE TEXT AND THE TARGET TEXT

Faithfulness to the original depends to a large extent on whether a translator understands the original text thoroughly. In other words, getting a complete and accurate comprehension of the source text is the basis of translation and any incorrect or inadequate understanding of the source text will result in unfaithfulness. *Lun Yu* is basically a book of Confucianism, the content of which constitutes its main important message. The key to the understanding of Confucianism is the basic Confucian concepts such as Ren, Li, Junzi, Zhengming, etc. Legge is remarkably successful in conveying the original message.

3.1 Notion of Ren

The core of Confucius' system is Ren, which occurs 109 times in *Lun Yu*. The difficulty lies in the fact that on different occasions Confucius often gives different explanations for this term, which results in a variety of translations, such as perfect virtue, goodness, kindness, benevolence, human-heartedness, altruism, charity, compassion, magnanimity, humaneness, humanity, etc. Which one is the best? To understand this special concept, we can probe into the different aspects of Ren, such as its essence, requirements and contents. Whether the target text has reflected the original message as far as the notion of Ren is concerned is to be evaluated in the following example.

Yen yüan asked about perfect virtue. The Master said, ‘To subdue one’s self and return to propriety, is perfect virtue. If a man can for one day subdue himself and return to propriety, all under heaven will ascribe perfect virtue to him. Is the practice of perfect virtue from a man himself, or is it from others?’ (*Lun Yu* Book 12 :Chapter 1)

This passage demonstrates the essence and requirements of Ren, that is, Confucius' doctrine of Ren is, in fact, a doctrine to improve one's character by oneself and a standard of an ideal character set for man. Legge translated Ren as “perfect virtue” instead of “goodness” as in Waley's version or “benevolence” as in D.C.Lau's version. He is correct. Ren in Chinese literally means “kind, benevolent” or “merciful”. However, it should be noted that before Confucius' time the word did not have ethical importance. It's in the pages of *Lun Yu* that Ren first appeared as a philosophical as well as ethical term, and its centrality is one of the great innovations of *Lun Yu*. The reason lies in the following facts: First, Confucius believed the moral foundation of social order must rest on the primary virtue of Ren, and he used the term Li to stand for the whole complex of conventional and social usage, which he endowed with a moral connotation. Thus combined, the sanctions of Ren and Li reinforced each other. So Ren in *Lun Yu* actually in essence belongs to the ethical category. Second, in Confucius' opinion Ren is the total of many virtues. It consists of such virtues as filial piety, fraternal submission, wisdom, courage, faithfulness, sincerity, gravity, respectfulness, altruism, generosity, earnestness, kindness, firm, enduring, simple, and modest. Therefore, Ren is not the kind of virtue which, like filial piety, can be unpacked into a list of specific duties. It is the supreme accolade for moral behavior. Lastly, Ren, as the keynote of Confucian political thoughts at the same time, emphasizes that government should be exercised by means of virtue. Confucius once said that “if a truly royal ruler were to arise, it would still require a generation, and then virtue would prevail.” (*Lun Yu* 13:12) By the performance of the appropriate propriety the ruler can help to secure universal harmony, so that his moral behavior has a certain magical quality, which can ensure the moral transformation of the people. Ren in the ideal sense can only occur as the result of such a complete transformation brought about by the perfect ruler. Therefore, “perfect virtue”, meaning in English supreme moral excellence and righteousness, (The American Heritage Dictionary, 1982, p.1351) accurately reflects the essence of Ren as both Confucian ethical thought and political thought as well as its rich moral content, and thus is much better than any other translations. For

example, “benevolence” simply means “an inclination or tendency to do kind or charitable acts” (The American Heritage Dictionary, 1982, p.171), which has greatly narrowed the content of Ren and is therefore inadequate. So do other versions like goodness (the state or quality of being good), magnanimity (being generous) and compassion (pity, feeling for the sufferings of others, prompting one to give help), etc. (Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English, 1989, p. 508.692.235)

Besides the precise understanding of Ren, Legge exactly conveyed the two aspects required by Ren: “keji” and “fuli”. “fuli” may be easily rendered, while “keji” may not. “ji” here does not mean oneself. It should be explained by “the selfish desires of the body”. So “keji” is not subduing oneself, but subduing and putting away the selfish desires in one’s nature or own personality. Legge translated “ji” into the word “self”, which means “one’s own interests or pleasure” (Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English, 1989, p.1052), and thus correctly conveyed the original message.

In the translation of this passage, such features of Ren as attainable, concrete and practical are reproduced as the original. Since Ren is an essential ingredient of the human being, not something that depends on anything outside himself, it should in theory be easily attainable, if men are true to their natures. The last sentence of this passage is designed to teach that every man may attain to this virtue for himself. Legge translated the key word of this sentence “er” into “or”. This translation is very faithful to Confucius’ intention because it implies a strong denial of what is asked. In one word, Legge’s translation has successfully conveyed the original message, from which the target readers can obtain a preliminary understanding of Ren as far as this passage is concerned.

3.2 Notion of Li

Li is another key Confucian concept coming second to Ren, and the word appears 71 times in Lun Yu. It is frequently mentioned together with music, the two things both imbuing and reflecting the ideal society. The original meaning of Li was “to sacrifice”. It was extended to denote the ritual used in sacrifice and then to signify, in addition to its present-day definition of “politeness” or “courtesy”, the entire body of usages and customs, political and social institutions. According to Confucius, Li has two major functions. First, it is necessary for everybody to know and obey Li as personal and social regulation. The following example is typical of such a function:

Look not at what is contrary to propriety; listen not to what is contrary to propriety; speak not what is contrary to propriety; make no movement which is contrary to propriety. (*Lun Yu* Book 12: Chapter 1)

The key to a correct translation for Li is to understand what Li is and what role it plays in Confucius’ system. Li covers everything from table manners to the three years of mourning on the loss of one’s parent, from the institution of parenthood to the appropriate posture for expressing commiseration. It is a social syntax that brings the particular members of community into meaningful relationships. Although Li had already existed since ancient times, it was Confucius who for the first time advocated the combination of Ren and Li, and thus endowed Li with a moral character. Li is the external manifestation of Ren, and to act on Li is to practice Ren, while Ren is the content as well as the soul of Li and without the content and the soul Li is a mere form, which is meaningless. It is mainly in this sense that Li is used in the source text. Legge’s translation “propriety”, meaning “state of being correct in behavior and morals” (Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English, 1989, p. 911), perfectly does justice to the original.

Second, Li is the foundation of government. Li is believed by Confucius to be better and more effective than laws and punishments:

The Master said, ‘If the people be led by laws, and uniformity sought to be given them by punishments, they will try to avoid the punishment, but have no sense of shame.
‘If they be led by virtue, and uniformity sought to be given them by the rules of propriety, they will have the sense of shame, and moreover will become good.’ (*Lun Yu* Book 2: Chapter 3)

This quotation contrasts propriety with law, and argues that punishments inflicted in accordance with the law do not have the ability to give people the conscience and sense of morality which make them obedient to the ruler's wishes. The true cohesion of a society is secured not through legal rules but through observances of propriety. It also shows the close relationship between De and Li: the inherent virtue of the ruler would be manifested in the appropriate behavior in accordance with propriety. Confucius' views that governing by virtue is to be preferred to governing by law are the earliest manifestation of ancient Chinese thoughts on the function of morals and the difference between morals and laws. Compared with Lin Yutang's version "ceremony" and D.C.Lau's version "rite", Legge's translation of Li as "propriety" or "rules of propriety" is admirable, for Li is closely related to morals and ethics. Besides, as far as this passage is concerned, the original text is characterized by a series of single Chinese character. Legge chose the exact equivalents to render them, and thus accurately conveyed the meaning of the original text, such as "lead" for "dao", "law" for "zheng", "punishment" for "xing", "avoid" for "mian", "sense of shame" for "chi", "virtue" for "de", and "become good" for "ge". Only the translation of "qi" is an exception, for "uniformity sought to be given" seems tediously long, which in result loses the original beauty of the parallel sentence structure.

3.3 Notion of Junzi

Another concept central to Confucian doctrine is Junzi. It occurs 107 times in the source text. Legge translated this term into "superior man", and since then there have been various other translations (e.g. "the noble man", "gentleman", "the exemplary man", "the virtuous man"). These translations are to be further discussed and evaluated in the following example:

Tsze-lû asked what constituted the superior man. The Master said, 'The cultivation of himself in reverential carefulness.' 'And is this all?' said Tsze-lû. 'He cultivates himself so as to give rest to others,' was the reply. 'And is this all?' again asked Tsze-lû. The Master said, 'He cultivates himself so as to give rest to all the people. He cultivates himself so as to give rest to all the people: — even Yáo and Shun were still solicitous about this.' (*Lun Yu* Book 14: Chapter 45)

This passage is a typical one dealing with the nature of Junzi. The Master's reply to Tsze-lû provides a description of the ideal role of Junzi, that is, Junzi practices self-cultivation, or cultivates his morality, in order to bring tranquility to all men. A correct understanding of the meaning of this term is of great importance for a desirable translation. The meaning of lexemes is divided into two aspects — denotative meaning and connotative meaning. According to Nida, "the designative meanings of lexemes represent referents in the practical or linguistic world, while the associative meanings represent the values and attitudes resulting from the use of lexemes in discourses. Discussions of lexical semantics generally focus upon designative (or denotative) meanings, although for translators the associative (or connotative) meanings are often far more difficult, since they tend to be subtle and elusive." (Nida, 1993, p.40) The term Junzi has almost universally a significance somewhat like the original meaning of the English word "gentleman", which comes from the French compound word "gentilhomme", denoting man of noble birth. In Chinese culture, originally Junzi referred to an aristocrat, a member of the social elite: one did not become a Junzi, one could only be born a Junzi. Confucius changed this usage completely. For him, on the contrary, Junzi is a member of the moral elite. It is an ethical quality, achieved by the practice of virtue, and secured through education. Every man should strive for it, even though few may reach it. An aristocrat who is immoral and uneducated is not a Junzi, whereas any commoner can attain the status of Junzi if he proves morally qualified, e.g. noble, unselfish, just, kind, etc. Although the denotative meaning of "gentleman" has always varied with historical and social development, the word normally keeps a connotative meaning of humorousness, considerateness, good manner or knight spirit. Therefore, the word "gentleman" will not arouse the same association in English-speaking people's minds as the Chinese term "Junzi" does in Chinese people's minds. Probably having realized this, Legge avoided using "gentleman" and chose "the superior man" to express "Junzi". Although this translation is much closer to Confucius' Junzi in denotation, it is still not entirely appropriate. The reasons lie in the following facts:

According to Confucius, only Junzi, the intellectual and moral upper class, is fit to rule. Confucius thought of person in political power, not primarily as a man who could cope skillfully with administrative problems, but as one who could act as an example to the people because of his morality; and he hoped that men who lacked the advantage of high birth but possessed the moral qualities required of a Junzi could thereby achieve status and play their part in government. So Junzi was primarily in the class sense, although at the same time, he would naturally be expected to follow a code of behavior appropriate to his rank. Conversely, the term Xiaoren, which was translated by Legge as “inferiors”, “the mean man” or “the lower people”, would be better translated as “common people” or “ordinary people”. Confucius, being very insistent on the need for precision in language (*Lun Yu* 13:3), specifically referred to a mean person as Bifu (*Lun Yu* 9:7 and 17:15) when he could have consistently used Xiaoren, if the latter term was meant to be purely derogatory.

On the other hand, it also seems out-of-character for Confucius as a sage to categorically divide human beings into two classes: the “superior man” and the “inferior man” — the latter will arouse the image of a man motivated by greed, jealousy, lust, etc. It would appear more logical for Confucius to classify his fellow human beings as ruler and ruled, or leader and followers, or noble person and common person as would have been the practice in feudal times, particularly when one was talking or selling an idea to the person holding authority.

From the above analysis, it's clear that Legge's translation “the superior man” for Junzi is not satisfactory in general, because it fails to reflect the class nature of Junzi in the source text. Both factors, ethics and class, should be considered when the term is translated. Compared with other translations, “the noble person” may be a more appropriate translation for the special Chinese term Junzi.

3.4 Notion of Zhengming

The expression “Zhengming” occurs only once in *Lun Yu*, but this concern actually pervades all the book: it sums up the whole Confucian enterprise. To find an English equivalent is not an easy job because this term involves rich historical and cultural background.

- 1) Tsze-lû said, ‘The ruler of Wei has been waiting for you, in order with you to administer the government. What will you consider the first thing to be done?’
- 2) The master replied, ‘What is necessary is to rectify names.’ (*Lun Yu* Book 13: Chapter 3)

To understand what Confucius said by Zhengming, it is necessary to look at Confucius' times, a period of historical transition. Confucius was obsessed with the decline from the ancient mores of the early Chou period, with the usurpation of titles and ceremonies, and with the fact that Junzi (in the class sense) could no longer be trusted to behave as a Junzi (in the moral sense). He believed that under such a circumstance the only way to restore order would be Zhangming. This is what is implied in the advice the Master gave to the duke Ching of Ch'î when he asked about government:

- 1) The duke Ching, of Ch'î, asked Confucius about government.
- 2) Confucius replied, ‘There is government, when the prince is prince, and the minister is minister; when the father is father, the son is son.’ (*Lun Yu* Book 12: Chapter 11)

This was a most appropriate recommendation, since the security of the duke's dynasty was menaced by ministers who were not content to be ministers, and the succession was being squabbled over by sons who were not content to accept their father's authority. So the principle of Zhengming includes two sides: on the one hand, the right name should be used to distinguish an actual nature or office. On the other, a person, especially an officer, should endeavor to live and behave in accordance with the name of his position and responsibility. For Confucius, Zhengming was not meant to apply to all names. He merely wanted princes and ministers and others with moral responsibilities to live up to the full meaning of those terms, as had happened in the Golden Age of the early Chou period. Generally speaking, Legge's literal translation “to rectify names” is successful, because it not only conveyed the original meaning of

the source text, but also kept the original flavour of the oriental philosophy.

3.5 Notion of Tian

Although there is much in *Lun Yu* about the observance of ritual both in religious and secular contexts, the work does not include specifically religious teaching and Confucius is depicted as displaying an agnostic attitude towards ghosts and spirits, although they are seen as part of the general experience of life. On the other hand, he is very conscious of the role of Tian. There are several passages in which Confucius speaks of Tian, the principal deity of the Chinese:

The Master said, 'Heaven produced the virtue that is in me. Hwan Tui —— what can he do to me?' (*Lun Yu* Book 7: Chapter 22)

In this saying Confucius placed emphasis on the role of Tian who "produced the virtue" in him. He seemed in fact, to have felt that he had been instructed by Tian with a mission to cure the ills of the world, and he hoped that Tian would not permit him to fail. Once when he cried out in despair that there was no one who understood him, he added, "But there is Heaven —— that knows me!" (*Lun Yu* 14:37)

The Master having visited Nantsze, Tsze-lû was displeased, on which the Master swore, saying, 'Wherein I have done improperly, may Heaven reject me! May Heaven reject me!' (*Lun Yu* Book 6: Chapter 26)

Nan-tsze was the wife of the duke of Wei, who was well-known for her lewd character, and hence Tsze-lû was displeased, thinking an interview with her was disgraceful to the Master. What did Confucius understand by the term Tian in the saying? Not an anthropomorphic being. Tian was seldom so conceived in his time, and there is explicit reason for rejecting this idea in connection with Confucius. If we examine the ways in which Confucius refers to Tian, it appears that this term stood, in his thinking, for a vaguely conceived moral force in the universe. According to Confucius, Tian is a norm, a measure, a reality, or a recourse that we ignore on peril of disfiguring our very selves and denying our actual situations. Only Tian can handle the resolution, the adjudication, of our moral failings. Only Tian can grant us forgiveness.

When Yen Yuan died, the Master said, 'Alas! Heaven is destroying me! Heaven is destroying me!' (*Lun Yu* Book 11: Chapter 8)

This is what Confucius said when his favourite disciple Yen Yuan died, revealing his deep sorrow. In his remark Confucius also mentioned Tian, to which he owed what human beings couldn't control or change. It reflects the feeling that, despite all our efforts, what happens is really out of our hands.

It seems that what Confucius refers to Tian is not unlike the Western God who has an omnipotent power. But from the above analysis, certainly Confucius is not primarily, as has sometimes been supposed, a religious prophet or teacher. So it is evident that a successful translation of Confucius' notion of Tian depends much on whether Confucius is understood as religious or not. Legge criticized Confucius in the prolegomena of *The Chinese Classics* for being "unreligious" (Legge, 1893, p.99) and that "by the coldness of his temperament and the intellect in this matter, his influence is unfavorable to the development of true religious feeling among the Chinese people generally." (Legge:1893, p.99) Therefore, Legge, with his profound knowledge in Chinese classics, literally translated Tian into Heaven instead of God or Te, Chinese notion of God, which appears frequently in She-king and Shoo-king. Legge's understanding is correct. Owing to historical limitation, Confucius could not account for many phenomena that he came across. This, coupled with the influence of old ideas, led him to resort to the concept of Heaven. Strictly speaking, his Heaven refers to the social or natural laws that he could not understand, or it may refer to the highest standard of moral or ethical ideas.

3.6 Doctrine of the Mean

Zhong Yong, commonly known in English as the doctrine of the Mean, is one of the most ancient cultural heritages of China. It's supposed to originate in the very remote past of Chinese history, but it was greatly emphasized and exemplified by Confucius and his followers. Not only does it belong to the ethical category, but also reflects Confucius' understanding of the nature as well as the law of the world. What Confucius calls the Mean includes the following two sides:

3.6.1 All things connected with man should strike the properness, and should not go beyond or fall short of it. (Zhong)

- 1) Tsze-kung asked which of the two, Shih or Shang, was the superior. The Master said, 'Shih goes beyond the due Mean, and Shang does not come up to it.'
- 2) 'Then', said Tsze-kung, 'the superiority is with Shih, I suppose.'

The Master said, 'To go beyond is as wrong as to fall short.' (*Lun Yu* Book 11: Chapter 15)

As far as this passage is concerned, Legge's translation is quite faithful to the original because he successfully rendered two key sentences — one is "Shih goes beyond the due Mean, and Shang does not come up to it", the other is "To go beyond is as wrong as to fall short". The former lacks the objects, which is common in ancient Chinese. Legge's contextual amplification "the due Mean" is necessary and appropriate. The latter actually has a deep meaning under the surface meaning. The literal translation of this sentence should be "To go beyond is the same as to fall short." But this sentence in fact reflects a strong negative attitude of Confucius towards "To go beyond" and "To fall short", on the ground that he regarded the Mean as the perfect virtue, and the chief purpose of his teaching was, as a matter of fact, to keep to the doctrine of the Mean. The character of Confucius also provides us with a typical example of the man who always adhered to the Mean. His general manner was "mild, and yet dignified; majestic, and yet not fierce; respectful, and yet easy." (*Lun Yu* 7:37). What Confucius requires is neither to go beyond nor to fall short. Therefore, an affirmative evaluation can be made that Legge's contextual amplification "as wrong as" has exactly conveyed the meaning between the lines in the source text, and thus achieved the requirement of faithfulness in translation.

The Master said, 'Your good, careful people of the village are the thieves of virtue.' (*Lun Yu* Book 17: Chapter 13)

This is a typical example of what Confucius explains the doctrine of the Mean. The difficulty lies in how to translate Xiangyuan. The term actually refers to those who always agree with others at the expense of principle. They are the people whom Confucius sharply criticized because Zhong is not compromise, but properness. In fact, Confucius hated those who had no principle, who would sit on the fence and always compromise. Legge's translation "good, careful people" fails to convey the original meaning of Xiangyuan, or even goes to the opposite. On the other hand, this translation will surely leave the target readers puzzled — how can good, careful people be the thieves of virtue? LinYutang's translation "goody-goodies" is much better for this term. In English the word "goody-goody" means "person who is primly or pretentiously virtuous" (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English, 1989, p.508). Therefore "goody-goodies" is not only equivalent in meaning but also derogatory in sense.

3.6.2 Different things or different sides of one thing should keep within certain limits and be in unity, thus achieving the harmony (unity) of the opposites. (He)

The superior man is affable, but not adulatory; the mean man is adulatory, but not affable. (*Lun Yu* Book

Here Legge's translation of He as "affable" and Tong as "adulatory" is oversimplified. In other words Legge merely conveyed the literal meanings but failed to perceive the philosophical significance of Tong and He. He, In Confucius' thought, refers to the harmony (unity) of the opposites, whereas Tong ignores the differences of the opposites and therefore leads to the simple sameness without contradiction. For example, in a family, each member has his or her unique and particular role. Harmony is simply getting the most out of these differences. Similarly, Confucius saw harmony in community emerging out of the uninhibited contributions of its diverse people. Communal enjoyment is like Chinese cooking — getting the most out of your ingredients. Confucius was extraordinarily fond of good music, because making music conduces to harmony, bringing different voices into productive relationships. Music is tolerant in allowing each voice and instrument to have its own place, its own integrity, while at the same time requiring that each ingredient find a complementary role in which it can add the most to the ensemble. And music is always unique in that each performance has a life of its own. This is Confucius' thought of He. Generally speaking, Legge's translation of the doctrine of the Mean is not so satisfactory. Failure to get a thorough and accurate comprehension of the source text from the philosophical point of view led to his mistranslation.

CONCLUSION

Lun Yu is a masterpiece of ancient Chinese prose, with not only profound thoughts but also a high literary value. Although the translation of such a Chinese classic involves great difficulties, the warm reception of Legge's translation in the Western world proves Legge's success. Dr Joseph Edkoms wrote that the publication of *The Chinese Classics* "marked an epoch in the history of sinology." He was deeply impressed by Legge's "thorough-going fidelity as a translator" and believed that his version has given the "resultant of endless Chinese speculations on Classic enigmas." (Ride, 1960, p.20)

The above comparative study on the source text and the target text reveals that Legge's version lives up to its reputation. The most remarkable quality of Legge's version is its faithfulness in content, owing to Legge's scholarly industry and keen perception of the original. Legge ensured a comprehension of Confucianism from his readership which is similar to the general Chinese interpretation. In spite of some referential and pragmatic inaccuracy, any careful, patient and judicious Western reader is able to perceive Confucius' key concepts (Ren, Li, etc.), and his ethical, political, philosophical and educational thoughts through Legge's translation.

The biggest problem of Legge's version lies in his preoccupation with the source text for accuracy. This, coupled with his lack of conscious efforts to achieve conciseness, leads to lengthy or heavy sentences, or even some awkward English appearing in his translation. As a result, the appeal and impact of his version have greatly been reduced.

Some illuminating enlightenment can be drawn from Legge's version as far as the translation of Chinese classics is concerned. No matter what techniques a translator uses in translation, he or she should always bear in mind that the source text is a Chinese classic, with a unique style and feature of conciseness, vividness and elegance, and with strong Chinese cultural background. Therefore, the translator should try in every possible way to preserve the original image and flavor in the target text in order to avoid the loss of meaning or style and the failure of cultural introduction. In order to achieve this goal, a combination of classicizing and orientaling the English language should be tried to help bridge the cultural gap created by the general difficulty of access to the Chinese classics in the West. Meanwhile, it is also necessary for the translator to realize the existence of the limit of translatability, which should be strictly observed rather than broken. This pioneer, and at the same time standard translation by Legge has provided us with so many good and useful translation techniques as well as enlightenment that it will continue to benefit the development of translation theory and practice.

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