



率性之谓道, 修道之谓教

——《中医经典文库·内经》译者例言英译

牛喘月

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Understanding the nature of translation through a comparison between the English version and the original Chinese of Forward to English Translation of Yellow Emperor's Canon of Medicine

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1 例言缘由

国家十一·五重点图书英汉对照《中医经典文库·内经》不日将由上海中医药大学出版社出版发行, 编辑约我写一例言, 介绍《内经》译事, 探悉译务甘苦。

《例言》拟就, 邀译友译为英文, 友人琢磨多日, 告之以“不可”。且曰: 此感唯君有, 他人如何知?

重新审读《例言》, 深然友人之说。翻译中医经典, 犹徒步穿越深山幽谷, 未有此经历者, 如何感悟此番游历之千种风情、万般雨花! 友人将其所译之语寄我, 以示其“理解之无由、表达之无向、忠信之无凭”。观其译文, 确感与我之原文甚为悬隔。

嗣后, 我又命学生试译, 以感悟翻译之局限性。学生翻译之前, 我曾详作解释, 以便其理解我之用意。然观其所译之文, 实未明了我之心境用意, 仅字面对译而已, 言外之意, 概未得释。由此可见, 译者对原文之理解与作者之初衷, 总是不甚吻合, 甚而偏差巨大。

兹将我之拙译与例言原语一并录之于后, 以供读友对参析解, 以外揣内, 详加比量, 彻悟译事真谛。

2 汉英对比

以下为例言之汉英对照, 请读友详加辨析, 细细

针砭。

我本农家子弟, 幸蒙世恩, 得入学府, 先习国语, 后研西文, 寄象之门, 由是而入。

I was born in a peasant's family. Fortunately I lived in a society that everyone had the chance to receive education. I first studied how to read and write miraculous Chinese characters in the primary school. Ten years later, I passed the entrance examination and entered Xi'an University of Foreign Languages to study English and translation.

惜自幼禀赋羸弱, 屡遭风寒, 未及而立, 形神俱危。师友亲朋有业医者, 常馈奇方异草。感其至诚, 无问源流, 一并食之, 岂料旧忧未解, 新患且增。不得已而践足医道, 以求自生。先习国医于秦都, 次修西技于唐府, 后研明堂于海上。

I was born weak and frequently troubled by ailments. Two years after my graduation from university, I was seriously ill and hospitalized for ten months. Some of my friends and relatives practiced medicine and tried to help me with various remedies. In a desperate plight, I was

certainly willing to try anything. Unfortunately these panaceas, instead of curing my illness, often brought me new problems. Finally I had no alternative but to study medicine myself. In Xianyang, Capital of the Qin Dynasty (221BC-206 BC), I studied traditional Chinese medicine in my spare time from September 1986 to July 1989; in Xi'an, Capital of the Tang Dynasty (618AD-907 AD), I studied Western medicine from September 1989 to July 1992 when I was studying for my master degree on English for Medical Purpose; in Shanghai, I specialized in acupuncture and moxibustion for my PhD on medicine from September 1996 to July 1999.

本欲精修岐黄之术,上以疗君亲之疾,中以济斯民之苦,下以解负薪之忧。怎奈医途崎岖,险若蜀道,遂执楫泛舟,逐波译海。历经数载,译医卅卷,匹夫之责,稍得尽矣。《内经》之译,廿载有余,沉舟病树,飘摇至今。

Originally I was determined to master the theory and practice of traditional Chinese medicine to help my parents, to serve the people and to solve my own problems. However medicine is not easy to study because it involves knowledge and skills of many other fields. Medicine is not easy to practice because it is a profession that directly deals with life and occasional carelessness may cause great disaster. That was why I did not do much clinical practice after graduation and eventually turned to translation of medicine. In the past twenty years, I have translated over 30 books about traditional Chinese medicine. The translation of traditional Chinese medicine is difficult because it not only needs knowledge of medicine and English language, but also classic Chinese culture and theories of different schools. Among the classics of traditional Chinese medicine, *Huang Di Nei Jing (Yellow Emperor's Canon of Medicine)* is proved to be most difficult to translate. I have devoted almost twenty years to the translation of this great canon. Through trials and errors, I have moved forward step by step like a boatman who rows a broken boat in a stormy sea.

《内经》者,华夏古国医家之祖,医典之宗,虽成书于秦汉,然绵延千秋未绝,至今仍为国医之根,临症之本。唐人王冰《黄帝内经素问注·序》赞之曰:

“其文简,其意博,其理奥,其趣深;天地之象分,阴阳之候列,变化之由表,死生之兆彰;不谋而遐迹自同,勿约而幽明斯契;稽其言有征,验之事不忒。”

Huang Di Nei Jing (Yellow Emperor's Canon of Medicine) is the foundation of traditional Chinese medicine and the earliest extant book on medicine in China. Though compiled in the period between the Qin Dynasty (221-206 BC) and the Han Dynasty (206 BC-220 AD), it was studied and practiced for thousands of years and is still regarded as the essentials of traditional Chinese medicine and the criteria of its clinical practice. In the Preface to *Huang Di Nei Jing Su Wen Zhu (Annotated Plain Conversation in Yellow Emperor's Canon of Medicine)*, Wang Bing, a great doctor in the Tang Dynasty, said, "It is simple in description, but profound in connotation; abstruse in theory, but significant in meaning. It not only has analyzed various phenomena in the natural world and different manifestations of Yin and Yang, but also has revealed the causes of changes and the indications of life and death. Once one has grasped such a great theory, he can understand anything, nearby or far away, without consultation with anybody and see the truth of clear and unclear things without agreement with anyone beforehand. When put into practice, its theory is proved correct and its therapeutic methods are always effective."

是故欲习岐黄之术者,必得精修《内经》之学。自古医家,莫不如此。悬想习医之初,遵师之教,日诵百言,揣摩词义文旨,考究天数地理,虽常昏然不解,心却时有所动,以至弃文从医,步入岐黄大道。

Thus those who want to study traditional Chinese medicine have to study *Huang Di Nei Jing (Yellow Emperor's Canon of Medicine)* first. And this was in fact the way how doctors in all the past dynasties studied medicine. When I was studying traditional Chinese medicine right after my graduation from university, my teacher advised me to recite a passage of the canon of one hundred characters each day. I did it and tried to decode the meaning of each passage and the possible implication of each character. Though often at a loss to understand the meaning, I was frequently inspired by some inexpressible enlightenment. That was why I later on gave up the job as an English teacher and took medicine as my

profession.

其时中西冰释,交往日繁。国医之术,渐为人识,赴华习修者,与日俱增。传译之务,别为一业。然岐黄之术乃华夏上古医技之传承,泰西诸国鲜有相当之理法方药以应之,遂使译事辞不达意,举步惟艰。我因旧曾研习西文,故于修医之余,常为师友翻书译文,由此而深感译华医于西文之不易,因之而萌发精研译理、传译《内经》之愿。

I began to study traditional Chinese medicine in September 1984. At that time, the relationship between China and the Western world was already normalized and the communication between the two sides was intensified. In the Western countries, traditional Chinese medicine was gradually recognized and more and more Westerners came to China to study this classic system of medicine. To meet such a need of communication between China and the West in the field of traditional Chinese medicine, a new profession, translation of traditional Chinese medicine, emerged as the time demanded. However, this task is proved difficult because traditional Chinese medicine is a medical system established thousands of years ago in China and therefore it is hard to find equivalents in the European languages about its theoretical terms and clinical expressions. Since I used to study English language and practice translation in my spare time, I was frequently asked to translate articles or books for friends and teachers who specialized in traditional Chinese medicine. From my personal experience I realized how difficult it was to translate traditional Chinese medicine into Western languages. Strangely enough, faced with such a difficulty and challenge, I did not shrink from it, but accepted it and was determined to study more and practice more, not only translating modern books about traditional Chinese medicine, but also the classics like *Huang Di Nei Jing (Yellow Emperor's Canon of Medicine)*.

《内经》之译,始于丁卯年春,终于丁丑年夏。风雨十载,未有片刻之废。其文古雅简博,其理玄奥趣深,常不易解。不得已,闭门苦读,沉思冥想,遍览诸子,探求门径。虽字斟句酌,惜难尽善。故译文向未刊印,仅作译技雕琢耳。辛巳年秋,友人张公来沪,欲与沪上朱公协作出版英译之《内经》。张朱协约,先出古、今、西对译本于长安,后出西文译本于海上。按此协约,《内经》之古、今、西对译本甲申年春版于

长安。嗣后三载,译本经师友披阅修正,再邀西士麦琪笔度,今于沪上付梓古、西对译文本,以践前约。为方便阅者计,译篇之外附以经文,经文之上,配以拼音。

I began to translate *Huang Di Nei Jing (Yellow Emperor's Canon of Medicine)* in early 1985 and roughly finished the translation in 1998. In my translation of this great book, I have been faced with various difficulties and problems, most of them are beyond my ability to solve. However I have never flinched from these difficulties. With the help of many teachers and friends, I have eventually accomplished this arduous task. The language used to write this great book was ancient, but elegant. The description was simple, but profound in connotation. The theory was abstruse, but significant in meaning. Frequently I was at a loss to understand the expressions or terms or ideas in it. In order to solve these problems, I locked myself in the room to read books written by the great masters living in the Spring and Autumn Period (722-481 BC) and the Warring States (475-221 BC), trying to find a way to the realm of *Huang Di Nei Jing (Yellow Emperor's Canon of Medicine)*. Though I tried my best to choose the words to explain the right meaning, I still felt that the core of the book was not fully expressed in my translation. That was why I did not publish it after over ten years of arduous work, just taking it as a way to practice my translation. In 2001, my friend Zhang Shuancai, the manager of World Publishing Company in Xi'an, came to Shanghai. He told me that he wanted to publish my translation of *Huang Di Nei Jing (Yellow Emperor's Canon of Medicine)* as a fascicle of the *Library of Chinese Classics*. I told him that I had already signed a contract with Zhu Bangxian, then the head of the Publishing House of Shanghai University of Traditional Chinese Medicine. He felt very much disappointed. A few days later, he came to Shanghai again and talked with Mr. Zhu about the possibility to jointly publish this book. Eventually they reached an agreement. According to their agreement, Zhang would publish in Xi'an the English translation-modern Chinese translation-original writing edition of *Huang Di Nei Jing (Yellow Emperor's Canon of Medicine)*, and Zhu would

publish the English translation edition in Shanghai. In 2004, Zhang published his trilingual edition in Xi'an. In the previous three years, I have invited some of my teachers and friends to examine my translation. They carefully compared my translation with the original writing, pointing out quite a number of misunderstanding and improper renderings. Early this year I have invited Maggie, an English teacher working in our university, to further polish my translation. She is very conscientious and has made changes in many places. To fulfill the agreement made by Mr. Zhang and Mr. Zhu six years ago, the English translation edition is going to be published in Shanghai this year. For the convenience of reading, some friends have suggested to attach the original writing to the translation. In order to make it easier for readers to read the original writing, the Chinese Pinyin (Chinese phonetic alphabet) is labeled over each Chinese character.

《内经》译事，非比寻常。千古经典，万世训示，字字珠玑，句句天言，名实之辨，实难释然。为求忠实，字斟句酌，亦步亦趋，不敢有分毫之违。所循之大道常法，乃“译古如古，文不加饰”。或云此法迂腐，此行昏聩。惜译人生性笨拙，只能缩手如此，不敢有非分之举，唯恐失之旁门，谬传圣教。从译之际，悬悬于心者，惟此而已。廿载春秋，殚精竭虑者，忠信二字。

To translate *Huang Di Nei Jing (Yellow Emperor's Canon of Medicine)*, a canon out of the ordinary, is an unusual task. It involves not only medicine, but the theories and practice of many other fields, such as astronomy, geography and phenology. Almost every character in it is significant. However, due to the changes of time and development of medicine, now to correctly understand the ideas, expressions and terms in *Huang Di Nei Jing (Yellow Emperor's Canon of Medicine)* is difficult. To be true to the original writing, I have transliterated most of the terms and expressions with necessary explanation in the brackets. In my translation, I have closely followed the structure of the original writing to compose the English sentences because the structure of a sentence or an expression in itself is meaningful in the Chinese literature. The principle I have established for my translation of *Huang Di Nei Jing (Yellow Emperor's Canon of Medicine)* is to render the antiquity as what the antiquity looks like and to avoid

any modification with modern sense. Some people may feel that such a way of translation is rigid and pedantic. However I prefer such a clumsy approach because my fingers are all thumbs. I personally feel that such a rigid way of translation will, to some extent, prevent possible misinterpretations about the instructions of the sages, which is what I have tried to do during my translation of this great works. Loyalty and sincerity, the virtues that have been cherished all through the history of Chinese civilization, are also what I have always followed in translating *Huang Di Nei Jing (Yellow Emperor's Canon of Medicine)*.

紧扣经文，比较古今，综合诸家，多法并举，取常存异，文不加饰，分寸之间，谨小慎微。此即我译《内经》之法技。老子曰：“天得一以清，地得一以宁，神得一以灵，谷得一以盈，万物得一以生。”一者，道也。万物得道则生，译事亦然。循一守意，成之以诚。

The methods that I have frequently used to translate *Huang Di Nei Jing (Yellow Emperor's Canon of Medicine)* are nothing special, quite ordinary indeed, i. e. close abidance by the original writing, comparing the ideas of the past with the present, synthetically analyzing the theories of different schools, combined use of various methods and skills, following the common practice and preserving different interpretations, avoidance of purposeful modification and being scrupulous in dealing with every character. Lao Zi (a great philosopher in the Spring and Autumn Period and the founder of Daoism or Taoism) said, "The heaven will become clear when it follows the universal law; the earth will become peaceful when it follows the universal law; the spirit will become vital when it follows the universal law; water in the valleys will be full when they follows the universal law; all things will grow properly when they follow the universal law." The universal law here refers to the Dao. When things follow this universal law, they will develop naturally and properly. The activity of translation is no exception. Only when the translators have closely followed such a law in translation can they correctly understand the original writing and properly compose their version.

《内经》译事，追本溯源，“一言以蔽之，思无邪”！

Based on my experience in translating *Huang Di Nei Jing (Yellow Emperor's Canon of Medicine)*, I personally feel that the spirit of translation, tracing to the root of the matter, "can be expressed in one sentence, that is to make no

deviation". This quotation is the comment Confucius made on the Canon of Poetry. However, it is also true in translation.

3 慨之不尽

读罢原文与译文,读友定感怪异。原文寥寥,译文何以繁琐如此?此即我录汉英文本于此之缘由。对照原语与译文,比量原意与译述,解析原文内涵与把握文外之意之法,可谓不辩自明矣。

作者构思文意,遣词造句,编排段次,自有大要趣旨在胸,且往往情思忽来,山奔海立,沙起雷行,作者自己,恐亦难明其实,何况读者译者!译罢例言,我自叹道:自家文字自家译,尚且有如此难达之处,译他人文字,疏、漏、缺、断,怎敢细究!

苏轼元丰三年(1080年)贬谪黄州,寓居定惠院所填之《卜算子》,仔细品味,不独悟得“人间”几何,亦可明得译者同等缺憾:

缺月挂疏桐,漏断人初静。谁见幽人独往来,飘渺孤鸿影。惊起却回头,有恨无人省。拣尽寒枝不肯栖,寂寞沙洲冷。

词首所重笔者意之“缺”、“疏”、“漏”、“断”四字,点破词家之幽独凄苦心境。然此四字若用以解析译事,记述译者面对原语与译语之感验,不也意趣独具么?

译事之中,何以有“缺”、“疏”、“漏”、“断”之缺憾?用王观堂先生《人间词》之《阮郎归》来考究,则是“消息隔重山”之故也。就原文而言,则原文是座山,作者亦是座山,作者所生、所居之国度文化,则更是一座大山。就译文而言,则译者是座山,译入语亦是座山,译入语之历史文化更是一座大山。

面对如此相互隔断之崇山峻岭,译者欲身跨两极,沟通中西,变天堑于通途,“其险也若此”!此中消息之重隔,神人共鉴。

Society for Acupuncture Research Announcement and Call for Papers

The Status and Future of Acupuncture Research: 10 Years Post-NIH Consensus Conference

University of Maryland at Baltimore
November 8-11, 2007
Baltimore, MD, USA

Co-sponsors include the University of Maryland, Harvard Medical School's Osher Institute, Shanghai University of Traditional Chinese Medicine, Journal of Chinese Integrative Medicine, Chinese University of Hong Kong, Kyung He University, Guanxi Medical University, Korea Institute of Oriental Medicine, Meiji University of Oriental Medicine, The World Federation of Acupuncture-Moxibustion Societies, and co-sponsors in Australia, Europe, and the USA.

Abstract submission deadline April 1, 2007

Purpose

This special event will mark the 10th anniversary of the landmark 1997 NIH Consensus Development Conference on Acupuncture.

- Leading researchers in the field from the U.S. and abroad will be invited to give keynote and overview presentations assessing progress in the past decade, and challenges and opportunities for future research.
- Members of the national and international acupuncture research communities will present original presentations in three major areas: clinical, basic science and methodology.
- Key issues will be addressed in panel discussions, break-out sessions, and poster sessions.
- Pre-conference workshops will focus on fundamentals of Oriental medicine (OM) research for OM practitioners, students, and educators new to this field.

Abstracts are solicited for presentations in the areas of clinical research, basic science and research methodology

Abstract submission

Please email your abstracts to helene.langevin@uvm.edu by April 1, 2007. Only email submissions will be accepted. Abstracts submitted after this date may not be considered. Abstracts will be reviewed by the Program Committee and prospective speakers will be informed by August 1, 2007 as to whether their papers have been accepted for oral or poster presentation.

Abstract format information and submission forms can be found on the SAR website

www.acupunctureresearch.org.