A Study on Scholar-Translators' Translation Ethics —Exemplified by James Legge's Translation of *Confucian Analects*

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Abstract—Since 1980s, there has been an "ethical turn" in translation research, translation ethics research has not only focused on specific translation strategies and techniques, but also shifted its attention to the ethics behind the choices of translators. Unlike professional translators, scholar-translators are responsible for studying the original works, authors, and even the source language and culture, so their ethics behind their translation choices are more complex than professional translators'. Therefore, this study intends to analyze the translation strategies adopted by James Legge, a scholar-translator, at the linguistic and cultural levels, and to explore the ethical models of translation followed by him when he translated *Confucian Analects*. According to the analysis on Legge's version of *Confucian Analects*, it can be concluded that "Faith" is the foundation of a scholar-translator's translation ethics.

Index Terms—*Confucian Analects*, scholar-translator, translation ethics, translation ethical model

I. INTRODUCTION

As an important subjects in the history of translation, scholar-translators have made significant contributions to the development of both translation theory and practice. Unlike professional translators, scholar-translators often have the dual tasks of academic research and translation, and are characterized by "studying what they translate and translating what they study" [1]. These translators were located in different historical periods, based on different research and translation perspectives, and their translation methods and strategies also have different stamps of the times. However, due to the similarity of their status as scholar-translators, there is always a certain similarity between their translation ideas and the translation ethics behind them. James Legge, a typical scholar-translator, was personally involved in the translation of the Bible, which led him to the idea of studying Chinese classics. The Chinese Classics translated by James Legge is widely accepted in western society, not only because of his outstanding translation skills, but also because of his translation ideas and the translation ethics, and Confucian Analects is also included in it.

Confucian Analects is a collection of discourses compiled by the disciples of Confucius to record the words and deeds of Confucius and his disciples. It embodies the political ideas, ethical thoughts, moral concepts and educational principles of Confucius and the Confucian School in a concentrated manner. Its language is concise but rich in Chinese culture, with far-reaching intentions and a profound influence on later generations. It is also because of its the profound influence on Chinese culture that it has attracted so many western scholars and translators to study and translate it.

The concept of "translation ethics" was put forward by Berman in 1984, and was promoted and developed by other scholars. Finally, Chesterman clearly summarized five translation ethics models. Choosing a proper translation ethic can help to harmonize various cultural relationships, resolve cultural conflicts, and promote the common progress and development of human society, which is the key to translation activities [1]. Thus, the proposal and development of "translation ethics" has undoubtedly provided new ideas for the study of the Chinese classics' translations.

We will explore James Legge's ethical models of translation as a scholar-translator through analyzing his translation strategy choices, in order to give some inspiration and suggestions for the translation of Chinese classics.

II. STUDIES ON TRANSLATION ETHICS

The concept of "translation ethics" was first proposed by a western scholar and gradually developed with the "ethical turn" in translation studies. Around the 1980s, domestic scholars also gradually paid attention to this research field.

A. Foreign Studies on Translation Ethics

The term "translation ethics" was introduced by the western scholar Berman in 1984. In his view, the efforts made by translators should be exposing heterogeneity, making readers aware of the differences between different languages [2], and whether this heterogeneity should be made visible or invisible depends to a large extent on the choice of the translator. In contrast to Berman, Pym used "cooperation" and "interaction" as the keywords of translation ethics [3].

Then Chesterman built on his predecessors and further advanced the development of translation ethics. His study of translation ethics was first seen in his monograph *Memes of translation: the spread of ideas in translation theory*, in which he sketched the outline of translation ethics and elaborated the basic scope of translation ethics research. He believed that the first task of the translator is to understand the will of the patron, to understand the original text, to understand the expectations of the reader, and that the translator has the responsibility to provide interpretation for the reader [4]. In 2001, Chesterman's article *Proposal for a Hieronymic Oath* published in a special issue of *The Translator* fully proposed five models of translation ethics, namely, the ethics of representation, the ethics of service, the ethics of communication, the norm-based ethics, and the

ethics of commitment. According to these five ethical models of translation, Chesterman argued that translators should ensure the greatest possible cross-cultural cooperation between communities who are differents from each other [5].

B. Domestic Studies on Translation Ethics

In China, the studies on translation ethics have also been around for more than twenty years, and its main research contents revolve around the following aspects.

The first category is mainly about the introduction and discussion of foreign research results related to translation ethics, for example, Shen and Tong [6] reviewed *The Return to Ethics* published in a special issue of *The Translator*; Chen [7] introduced Chesterman's translation ethics ideas; Xin [8] analyzed and discussed Pym's translation ethics ideas; Lv and Wang [9] reviewed and reflected on the representative theories in western translation ethics research.

The second category mainly focuses on the discussion of translation ethics itself, for example, the researchers defined the concept of "translation ethics" and put forward the idea of constructing the discipline of translation ethics [10–12]. Scholars analyzed the ethical turn in translation studies, the motivation of the ethical turn and its importance [13–15].

The third category is applied researches on translation ethics, e.g., Huang and Huang [16] analyzed the influence of traditional Chinese translation ethical ideas on translators' choices. In this category, more scholars adopt the Chesterman translation ethics model as a theoretical framework, e.g., Xie [17] conducted a comparative study of the translations of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* by Zhang Ruogu and Sun Zhili from the Chesterman translation ethics model and summarized the different ethical tendencies of the two translators in three aspects: psychological description, environmental description and character description [17]. Li [18]. explored the translation strategies and ethical patterns followed by the Yang and Dai couples in translating the culturally distinctive words of *Dou E Yuan* in this theoretical framework

Generally speaking, there are rich results in the discussion of translation ethics theory at home and abroad, and scholars have put forward many different views on translation ethics. Moreover, applied research from the perspective of translation ethics has been advancing in the domestic academic community, and the research paradigm is relatively mature, especially the applied research from the perspective of Chesterman's translation ethics model, but such applied research seldom focuses on the translation of Chinese classics.

III. STUDIES ON SCHOLAR-TRANSLATORS

The most important feature of scholar-translators is that they study what they translate and translate what they study [19], that is, these translators are also researchers of the works they translate, such as Howard Goldblatt, Zhang Ruogu, Ye Junjian, etc. Initial progress has been made on case studies of scholar-translators, for example, Han [20] analyzed the differences in subjectivity between scholar-translators and professional translators by comparing the subtexts of Minford's translation of *Deer and Caldron* and Hao Yuqing's translation of *Legends of CondorHeros: A*

Hero Born. However, in general, case studies of scholar-translators are still in a relatively fragmented state. Huo and Yang *et al.* [21] studied the development of scholar-translators as a group in China over time, and divided the group of scholar-translators in China into three groups according to historical stages, which to a certain extent promotes the study of scholar- translators as a group.

IV. CHESTERMAN'S MODEL OF TRANSLATION ETHICS

In a special issue of *The Translator* in 2001, Chesterman published *Proposal for a Hieronymic Oath*, in which he proposed five ethical models of translation, the first four of which were summarized based on his previous research on translation ethics, namely, the ethics of representation, the ethics of service, the ethics of communication, the norm-based ethics and the ethics of commitment. He also deliberately took his past proposal of the value of clarity as an example, pointing out that clarity has different meanings under different ethical models, thus leading to his fifth model "ethics of commitment" [15].

The ethics of representation means that the translation should accurately reproduce the original text or the original author's intention, without arbitrary additions, deletions or tampering, and translators in this ethical model will focus on "truth". And the ethics of service means that translation ultimately meets the client's requirements and achieves the goals mutually agreed upon by the client and the translator. In this ethical model, the translator's loyalty is first and foremost to the client and, of course, to the readers of the translated language and the original author. Then the ethics of communication views the ethical goal of translation as further cross-cultural cooperation between two dissimilar communities. As for the norm-based ethics, means that the norms in the translating culture represent the expectations of the translating culture for the translation at that time. On the basis of the first four ethical models, Chesterman proposed the ethics of commitment, which is a code and oath for translators to fulfill their professional ethics [5].

The above five translation ethics models proposed by Chesterman all agree that the translator should be responsible for the author of the original text, the reader of the translation and the quality of the translation, and the translator should try to win the trust of other community in the translation communication to achieve the purpose of promoting mutual understanding and communication among national cultures. This not only provides a relatively comprehensive reference for translation ethics research, but also provides a clearer framework structure for related applied researches.

V. ANALYSIS ON THE TRANSLATION ETHICS MODELS OF LEGGE IN CONFUCIAN ANALECTS

Confucian Analects from James Legge, was included in the first volume of *The Chinese Classics*, first published in Hong Kong in 1861 and revised and reprinted in Oxford in 1893. Since its inception, this version has been sought after by western societies and has even been regarded as the "standard translation". Qin and Kong *et al.* [22] conducted a statistical survey on the frequency of citations of the translations of

Confucian Analects, counting the online citations of each of the eleven translations of five sentences in *Confucian Analects*. The data showed that the most frequently cited translations were in the order of Legge's, Mill's and Waley's, which showed the popularity of Legge's version.

A. Linguistic Level

1) "仁" and "义"

As a classic of Confucianism that has been handed down for thousands of years, the historical and cultural connotations contained in the philosophic theory in *Confucian Analects* are complex, and the number of occurrences of "仁" and "义" as the core concepts in *Confucian Analects*, it is more difficult to translate "仁" and "义" in an accurate way.

Example 1:
Original text: 仁
Translations: Benevolence, Benevolent, Benevolence action/ Virtue, Virtuous, Perfect virtue [23]

"仁" is a moral concept with a wide range of meanings advocated by Confucianism, and is the essence of Confucian philosophy, which includes respect, generosity, faith, sensitivity, wisdom, courage, loyalty, forgiveness, filial piety, propriety, and fraternity [24]. In different chapters, "仁" has one of or some of these specific qualities, thus it is difficult to translate "仁" extreme appropriately.

In Legge's version, the two keywords "benevolence" and "virtue" are used to explain "仁" which is translated as "virtue" in the level of morality and "benevolence" in the level of specific behavior. In religious terms, "virtue" means "moral angel, the fifth of the nine levels of angels" [25]. This shows that Legge wants to establish a connection between traditional Chinese culture and Christian doctrine in a way that is inextricably linked to his status as a missionary to China.

Example 2:
Original text: 义
Translation: Righteousness/ What is Right/ What is Duty/ What is Just [23]

Compared to "仁", "义" does not appear very frequently in *Confucian Analects* ("仁": 105; "义"：24). In *Confucian Analects*, "义" is often used with "君子", "德", "知", etc., which shows its importance in the Confucian philosophic theory. "义" is the specific behavior of "仁"[26], which means that "义" is "仁", a more specific form of "仁".

Regarding the translation of "义", Legge has adopted the above four kinds, but "righteousness" appears most frequently among them. In *The New Oxford English-Chinese Dictionary*, "righteousness" refers to "the quality of being morally right or justifiable", and it is easy to see that its literal meaning includes not only fairness and justice but also benevolence and morality, which is basically equivalent to the "义" in *Confucian Analects*. However, if we look into its etymology, it will be found that "righteousness" refers to God's judgment in Christianity, which has a strong religious background [27].

In general, Legge firstly follows ethics of representation to explain their literal meanings. In the translation process, Legge has clearly studied both the language and the context of the original text. For example, he uses "benevolence" and "virtue" to translate the different levels of "仁" in the original text. This shows that Legge, as scholar-translator, not only has a deep study of the original text, but also embodies his ethics of representing the original text in the process of translation. Secondly, influenced by his own missionary identity and educational background, Legge tries to link the important concepts in Confucian classics with Christian doctrine under the ethics of service and communication. By following these ethics, Legge not only help western readers to understand the philosophic theory in *Confucian Analects*, but also enhance communication between China culture and western culture. Not only that, when several translation ethics appear at the same time, it also implies the translator's balance between several translation ethics models in the translation process, and thus the translator enters into the fifth ethical model proposed by Chesterman——the ethics of commitment. Then it can be concluded that in translating the two important concepts of "仁" and "义", the legge follows Chesterman's ethics of representation, service, communication and commitment.

2) Syntactic level

There exists lots of differences between Chinese and English at syntactic level. In most cases, Legge chose literal translation strategy to represent the sentence patterns in the original text.

Example 3:
Original text: 子曰："视其所以，观其所由，察其所安，人焉廋哉？人焉廋哉？"（《论语·为政篇》）
Translation: The Master said, "See what a man does. Mark his motives. Examine in what things he rests. How can a man conceal his character? How can a man conceal his character?" [23]

The sentences in the original article are typical sentence with no subject in Chinese, which exists in both spoken and written languages, mainly referring to sentences with omitted subjects, while in English only some special cases allow subject omission [28]. In other words, sentences without subjects in Chinese are mostly "absolutely no-subject sentences", which refer to those sentences in which the subject is hidden and cannot be made explicit and specific, but Chinese sentences are made natural by virtue of the meaningful function, semantic articulation and internal logic, while English sentences are mostly "relatively no-subject sentences", which is totally different from English. In English, we emphasize the subject-predicate structure, and theoretically there are no English sentences with no subjects.

In translation activities, there are many ways to deal with sentence with no subject in Chinese, among which the common ones are active-passive transformation and supplementary of subject, etc. In Example 3, Confucius says that someone's character can be observed by seeing his or her "所以", "所由", "所安", but, in the sentence, he does not specify the subject. And the saying seems to be a teaching to the hearers, but in fact it is a recommendation to all. So the subject implied here is highly general, and not even specific to a group of people. Therefore, Legge employs an

imperative sentence that represent sentence with no subject in original text.

Example 4:

Original: 子曰："里仁为美。择不处仁，焉得知？"(《论语·里仁篇》)

Translation: The Master said, "It is virtuous manners which constitute the excellence of a neighborhood. If a man in selecting a residence, do not fix on one where such prevail, how can he be wise?" [23]

There are some studies on Chinese interrogative sentences. Shao [29] proposed five levels of Chinese interrogative sentences: strong interrogative sentences—special questions, high interrogative sentences—general question with "吗", medium interrogative sentences—positive-negative interrogative sentence, low interrogative sentences—general question with "吧" and interrogative sentences without question—rhetorical question. This hierarchy is made according to the degree of doubt, which shows that although the rhetorical question is formally a question, it does not have the meaning of "doubt". Therefore, the rhetorical question is sometimes directly translated as a declarative sentence. However, in most of the translations of Legge's version of *Confucian Analects*, the rhetorical question still retains its original form, as in Example 4. Confucius emphasizes the importance of "处仁" through the rhetorical question—"焉得知?" In his translation, Legge translates the rhetorical question by literal translation, representing the original sentence pattern and emphasizing the deeper meaning implied in it.

At the level of sentence pattern, Legge upholds the ethics of representation proposed by Chesterman, preserving to a greater extent the sentence pattern and other implied meanings in the original text, such as generalization and emphasis. This is one of the reasons why the Legge's version is able to introduce Chinese culture into western society in a more systematic way and gain wide recognition.

B. Cultural Level

Rufeng [30] argued that the common cultural translation strategy in the translations of *Confucian Analects* from missionaries is to translate Confucianism with Christianity, which means that translators explain the concepts and even philosophical theories of Confucianism with Christianity, which can pave the way for the spread of Christianity. This approach prevails among the missionaries, which made Legge unconsciously inclined to the ethics of service proposed in his version of *Confucian Analects*, i.e., to satisfy the expectations of western readers and the London Society, the patron behind him.

The system of patronage for Legge's translation of *Confucian Analects* can be divided into the following three parts: patronage agency, financial sponsors, and publishers. Legge's patronage agency—the London Missionary Society, was established for the purpose of spreading the Christian gospel to pagans. The London Missionary Society actually sent missionaries to China in 1804. Through the introduction of *A Memoir on the Importance and Practicability of Translating and Printing the Holy Scriptures in the Chinese Languages*, written by Pastor William Moseley, the London

Missionary Society found that translating the Chinese classics would be beneficial to the spread of Christianity. Driven by this interest, the London Missionary Society wanted missionaries sent to China to learn Chinese and to work on translating *the Bible*. It is thus clear that the primary purpose of the London Missionary Society in allowing missionaries to study Chinese and translate Chinese classics was to serve the spread of Christianity. As for the Joseph and Robert, the sponsors of the publication of *the Chinese Classics*, Legge explains in the title page of the book and in the preface to the first volume, and gives a detailed account of the sponsorship process. These two were brothers, and their family at the time operated a Sino-British trade that involved financial and smuggling activities, even including opium smuggling. However, according to the available information, the brothers played a role similar to that of a "sleeping patron" and did not interfere much with the translation activities of Legge. In addition, the publisher's requests also had some influence on Legge's translation activities. In his early translation activities, Legge paid special attention to the role of exegesis. Later, however, Trubner, for commercial reasons, suggested that he publish a "popular version" of *the Chinese Classics* to satisfy the needs of the majority of the general readership. This meant that the valuable commentary in the translation would have to be heavily trimmed, especially the detailed expository content, in order to meet the reading level of the general public. For financial reasons, Legge accepted the company's proposal to revise the content of *the Chinese Classics*, removed a large number of commentaries, koans and textual exegesis, and published *the Life and Teaching of Confucius*. In summary, Legge, under the influence of western readers and various sponsors, had to follow the ethics of service to a certain extent in order to ensure the smooth publication and acceptance of the translation.

However, it is undeniable that, as a scholar-translator, Legge's translations are different from those of the early missionaries'. He rises from the introduction to Chinese culture to a critique of Chinese culture, refusing to adhere to one school of thought and ultimately choosing a suitable concept and way of expression to translate based on critical thinking [31]. For example, when translating the second chapter of *Confucian Analects*, the introductory remarks attached by Legge include the background of writing *Confucian Analects*, the commentaries and its purpose as well as its authenticity, etc. It can be seen that, although Legge tends to meet the expectations and requests of the target community, he also pays attention to the research of the original text itself, and tries to represent the original text and the original author's intention. Thus, on a cultural level, Legge tries to keep the balance among the ethics of representation, service and communication, which also means that he followed the ethics of commitment.

VI. THE FOUNDATION OF THE SCHOLAR-TRANSLATOR'S TRANSLATION ETHICS-"FAITH"

Since 1980s, there have been discussions and studies on translation ethics. From Berman's "heterogeneity" to Pym's specific ethical principles [15], then Chesterman's five

models of translation ethics, and Chinese scholars' discussions on "translation can not exist without faith" [32]. The discussions about how to construct translation ethics are still continuing, the translation ethics of scholar-translators, as important promoters in the history of translation, are even more worthy of investigation.

From the above analysis, it is clear that Legge, as a scholar-translator, follows the ethics of representation proposed by Chesterman in both the linguistic level and the cultural level of translation. And according to Chesterman, the ethics of representation is representing the original text or the original author's intention, without arbitrary additions, deletions or tampering, and translators in this ethical model will focus on "truth" [5], which means be faithful to the original text and the original author. Thus, we can conclude that "faith" is the foundation of scholar-translators' translation ethics. On the linguistic level, "faith" refers to faithfulness to the original text, as in the Legge's version of *Confucian Analects*, he adopts literal translation to represent the meanings and sentence patterns of the original text, reflecting his respect for the original text as a scholar-translator. On the cultural level, "faith" refers to faithfulness to the author's thoughts and to the source culture. In his translation of *Confucian Analects,* Legge, influenced by his missionary identity and his patron, the London Society, interpreted Confucianism with elements of Christian doctrine, which to a certain extent violated "faith". However, in the process of translating *Confucian Analects*, Legge conducted various commentaries and exegesis of the descendants of *Confucian Analects*, and presented them in the translation. This shows the rigorous attitude of Legge as a scholar-translator in a sense. The great influence of Legge's version of *Confucian Analects* in western society is closely related to the linguistic and cultural levels of "faith". From this, it can be concluded that "faith" is the foundation of translation ethics that scholar-translators followed, and it should be followed by every translator.

VII. CONCLUSION

This paper analyzes the ethical models followed by Legge in translating *Confucian Analects* from the ethical model of translation proposed by Chesterman, with the aim of drawing out the foundation of scholar-translators' translation ethics. "Faith", as the translation ethics to be followed at both the linguistic and cultural levels, naturally becomes the core and foundation of translation ethics.

Nowadays, the world is undergoing a great change unprecedented in a century, and China is going to meet amount of opportunities and challenges in the future. In the face of various voices in the international community, it is of great historical significance to present a real and overall figure of China. And I hope that this paper can provide more suggestions for the construction of translation ethics and also can help the specific translation activities of Chinese classics so that China can be known in a more well-rounded way. However, due to the limited capacity of us, it is difficult to propose a more complete frame of translation ethics. We hope that more and more scholars will pay attention to the construction of translation ethics and propose more possibilities for the development and exploration of ethical views of translation in the future.

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