A Cognitive-Semiotic Approach to the Translations of *Tao Te Ching*

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Abstract

This article pursues a cognitive-semiotic approach to Arthur Waley's English translation and Richard Wilhelm's German translation of the *Tao Te Ching*. Semiotics of translation is on the way to becoming an independent discipline (Torop, 2008). The semiotic shift in translation studies provides us with a dynamic and holistic view beyond mere lexical and syntactic interests. Based on Peirce's semiotic triangle, a translation model of Chinese classics is proposed, which features the growth and interaction of signs. Two rounds of semiosis between the semiotic system of source language, the pre-semiotic schema of translator and the semiotic system of target language are examined sequentially. In the first semiosis, Waley and Wilhelm adopted different ways of decoding both in the semantic and philosophical dimensions; in the second semiosis, their different ways of recoding give rise to different styles of renditions. Moreover, it is important for translators to bear both the verbal and nonverbal signs in mind, in that translation is an endless semiosis of multimodal communication.

Keywords: semiotics of translation, **Tao Te Ching***, Peirce's semiotic triangle, growth of signs*

1. Semiotics of Translation

Linguistic and non-linguistic researches have crucial implications for translation studies. Translation theoreticians have oftentimes based their researches on linguistics, literary studies, cultural studies, psychology and so on. A growing number of scholars have realized that linguistics itself cannot explain all translation issues; however, translation should be approached with a more comprehensive view. The embryo of translation semiotics has been developing ever since Wittgenstein's picture theory, language-game and Peirce's semiotic triangle. Moreover, Roman Jakobson's tripartite classification

has injected semiotic insights into translation studies as well. According to Jakobson's typology, translation can be classified into three categories, namely interlinguistic, intralinguistic and intersemiotic translation: "Intralingual translation or rewording is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs of the same language. Interlingual translation or translation proper is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of some other language" (Jakobson, 1959/2000, p. 114). It is Jakobson's understanding that "intersemiotic translation or transmutation is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign system" (Jakobson, 1959/2000, p. 114) which views translation beyond mere linguistic communication.

Translation studies and modern semiotics have been increasingly engaging one another. Eugene Nida (1964) used the process of semiosis to analyze the translation issues within a socio-semiotic framework. Dinda Gorlee based her research on Peirce's semiotics and proposed the term "semiotranslation": "Translation is an endless semiosis where translators play a key role as they try to interpret the source text and produce its translated form in the target language." (1994, pp. 226-227) The "semiotics of translation" or "translation semiotics" has been established as a theoretical approach in *Routeledge of Translation Studies* (Baker, 1998; Baker & Saldanha, 2009). According to Susan Petrilli (2001, pp. 278-279), "translation … is a phenomenon of sign reality and as such it is the object of study of semiotics." From the perspective of semiotics, translation is regarded as a semiotic phenomenon that concerns the transition from the semiotic system of source language to that of target language. For Eco and Nergaard, "translation involves passing from a text 'a', elaborated according to a semiotic system 'A', into a text 'b', elaborated according to a semiotic system 'B'" (2001, p. 221). As a linguist and translation theorist, Peeter Torop (2008) is another proponent for the semiotic approach to translation nowadays, claiming that "translation semiotics itself can be regarded as a discipline that deals with mediation processes between various sign systems, and on the macro level, with culture as a translation mechanism."[1]

The Chinese interdisciplinary studies on translation semiotics and semiotranslation mainly focus on literary translation semiotics (Lv, 1994; Jiang, 2003; Cao, 2013), translation of the socio-semiotics (H.-W. Chen, 1996; Li, 1997; Lu, 2007), ontology of translation semiotics (Z.-J. Wang, 2007; L.-J. Wang, 2013), and so on. Jia Hongwei (2016) discusses the possibility of establishing a new discipline of "Translation Semiotics" and argues that scholars should make efforts to explore the application of linguistic semiotics by studying the translation of both literary and non-literary texts, such as the Nobel Laureate Mo Yan's novels, *I Ching* and the *Tao Te Ching*. Jia (2016) holds that translation is a process of metacreation that makes cross-media information transmission possible.

Meanwhile, Kourdis (2015, p. 317) points out that "the semiotics of translation runs the risk of becoming entangled in a theoretical level of thought which is not compatible with a primarily applied practice like translation," and "the research field can be considerably enriched by the French school of semiotics, which has a long history

of applied semiotics". In my view, the importance of applying the theory of semiotics to translation practices cannot be underrated; otherwise, the approach or discipline of "translation semiotics" will have a tendency of becoming "a castle in the air". Therefore, this article will set out to examine the validity of translation semiotics by looking into Arthur Waley's English and Richard Wilhelm's German translation of the *Tao Te Ching*.

2. *Tao Te Ching* and Its Translations

Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism are the three main pillars of traditional Chinese thought. "Taoism", in particular, designates both a philosophical tradition and an organized religion. Laozi (Laotse or Lao-tzu) is traced back as the origin of the philosophical Taoism (Daojia). Sage Laozi supposedly wrote a short book, simply named after his own name, *Laozi*. When the book of *Laozi* was recognized as a "classic" on account of its profound insight and significance, it acquired a more exalted title, the *Tao Te Ching*, commonly translated as the "*Classic of the Way and Virtue*".

2.1 About *Tao Te Ching*
The received book is a short text of around 5,000 Chinese characters and 81 chapters. The opening words of its two sections, namely "way" ("道", tao/dao, Chapter 1) and "virtue" ("德", te/de, Chapter 38) plus "classic" ("经", ching/jing), compose the name of the book. It is concerned with the "way" (Tao) and how it finds expression in "virtue" (de), especially through what the text calls "naturalness" ("自然", ziran) and "non-action" ("无为", wuwei). Nevertheless, these concepts are open to interpretation. The interpretation of the *Tao Te Ching* demands careful hermeneutic reconstruction, which requires both analytic rigor and historical imagination. Laozi wrote this book in a poetic style based on metaphors and aphorisms so that it appears to be engagingly suggestive and polysemous.

2.2 Translations of *Tao Te Ching*
A new trend of translating the Chinese classics has been booming in China since 1980s. Many ancient Chinese classics have been translated into Western languages by Chinese and Western translators, such as *Yi Jing*, *Shi Jing* (*The Book of Songs*), *Sun Zi's Art of War*, *Laozi* (the *Tao Te Ching*), *Zhuangzi*, *The Peony Pavilion*, and so on. As early as the 19th century, some Western scholars had cast their eyes towards the East, translating classical works into Latin or their native languages, in an attempt to unveil the mysterious Orient to their countries.

The *Tao Te Ching* is viewed as a paradigm of the Chinese classics "going global". Next to the *Bible*, the *Tao Te Ching* is the most translated work in the world. In the 7th century, the *Tao Te Ching* was translated into Sanskrit. It was in the 16th century when many preachers came to China that the *Tao Te Ching* began its journey to the West. In the 18th century a Latin translation was brought to England, after which there has been a steady supply of translations into Western languages, most into English, German

and French. With only about 5,000 words, it has been translated into more than 1,100 renditions in over 28 different languages, tantamount to the most translated classic in Chinese literature (Xin, 2008, p. 9). Many renowned scholars have translated the *Tao Te Ching*, such as James Legge, Arthur Waley, Richard Wilhelm, Stephen Mitchell, Lin Yutang, Wang Rongpei and Gu Zhengkun and so forth. Their personal background varies from one to another, and some of their renditions are so different from others, even containing contrary interpretations.

Many scholars with a foundation in Chinese language and philosophy tried to render the original meaning of the text as faithfully as possible into English. However, scholars have been engaged in disputes as to the real meaning of the original, even in the intralingual interpretation. Classical Chinese, whose older meaning differs from the modern language, relies heavily on allusion to a corpus of literary work to convey semantic meaning and semiotic significance. Some of the characters can thus no longer be positively translated. The Chinese symbols do not necessarily have an equivalent in the semiotic system of target language. A symbol could be translated in several different ways, in that it represents concepts rather than some clear and definite terminologies, not to mention the fact that many of the words that the *Tao Te Ching* uses are deliberately vague and ambiguous. As a result, how to render the meaning of the book remains an arduous challenge for the translators.

3. A Semiotic View: From Peirce's Semiotic Triangle to Translation Semiotics

As regards the translation of Chinese classics, the three aspects of translation in Jakobson's terminology may be involved in a single process of translation. Chinese Classics were written in classical Chinese language, which can be distinctively different from the Chinese language in the translator's historic period, so the translator first needs to do intralingual translation, i.e., interpret the verbal signs of the original text from classical Chinese to the Chinese language that he/she masters. Interlingual translation takes place when the translator renders his/her interpretation of the verbal signs into the signs of another language. The intersemiotic aspect of translation denotes the interpretation of verbal signs by means of nonverbal signs, such as images and other forms of concepts.

What has influenced the Western translators in the process of translating the Chinese classics? In what follows, I will turn to address the conundrum by comparing Arthur Waley's English version and Richard Wilhelm's German version from a cognitive-semiotic perspective. The former is reprinted every five or six years in England and has become one of the most influential versions in the western world, and the latter is a German version which even earned acclaim from Arthur Waley.

The *Tao Te Ching* is comprised of both verbal and non-verbal signs. Verbal signs are presented both in linguistic forms and philosophical thoughts, while non-verbal signs are mainly embedded in visual and acoustic carriers. Translation is never a simple transfer

of verbal and nonverbal signs from source language (SL) to target language (TL), but rather a fairly intricate process in which the translator, as the interpretant of various signs of the original text, preoccupied with his/her pre-semiotic schema, blends the verbal and non-verbal signs of source text into the target language. All of the signs involved in the rendition are subject to the interpretation of target readers at last. Accordingly, the translation of *Tao Te Ching* is by no means a static and secluded process of linguistic encoding and decoding, but a dynamic and endless evolution of semiosis.

Saussure's Sign Theory defined a sign as being made up of "signifier" and "signified". Unlike Saussure, Peirce sees a sign as a complex of three components. A sign has three constituents—medium (M), object (O), and interpretant (I) —representing respectively form, reference and explanation, which together compose a "trinity", determining the meaning of a sign and acting as its essential characteristics (Peirce, 1958), as is shown in Figure 1. Peirce claims that a sign lends itself to interpretation, and is translatable by other sign systems (Kourdis, 2015, p. 307). Furthermore, a text is a "complex verbal sign partaking of the basic properties common to semiotic signhood" and "the text sign is a living agency actively seeking to realize itself through some interpreting mind, rather than passively waiting to be realized by it, as is the case in linguistic semiotics" (Gorlee, 2004, p. 64). According to Wang Mingyu (2015, p. 117), Figure 2 serves to illustrate the upward and stepwise growth of signs in Peirce's semiotic theory.
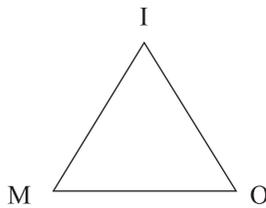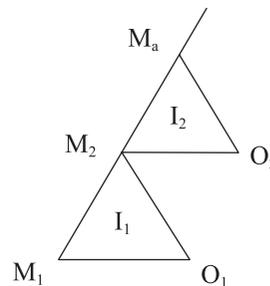
Figure 1   Figure 2

Let's now move on to discuss the development of signs in different semiotic systems during the process of translation. In my view, the relationship between semiotics and translation studies can be understood as follows:

M_1 = original text
O_1 = ideas behind the original text
I_1 = translator's interpretation of the original text
M_2 = the ACTUAL rendition that the translator produces
O_2 = ideas behind the rendition
I_2 = target readers' interpretation of the rendition

Theoretically speaking, translation activity can be understood as an interaction and

growth of signs (Figure 2). As an interpretant of M_1, the translator first attempts to grasp the O_1 intended by the original author. With his/her interpretation of M_1, the translator then tries to produce M_2. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that O_2, the ideas behind the rendition might be inequivalent to O_1, as a cognitive gap can exist between the author and translator. Finally, target readers are responsible for developing their individual I_2. However, in case of retranslation or back-translation, readers can become translators again, so the sign development are even more complicated, subject to more intertwined and overlapping effects. In general, the process of translation can be divided into two rounds of semiosis (Figure 3):

Semiosis 1: By blending his/her pre-semiotic schema with the signs of the first semiotic system of source language, the translator produces his/her interim $1\frac{1}{2}$ semiotic system;

Semiosis 2: By blending his/her interim $1\frac{1}{2}$ semiotic system with the semiotic system of target language, the translator renders M_2.

Figure 3
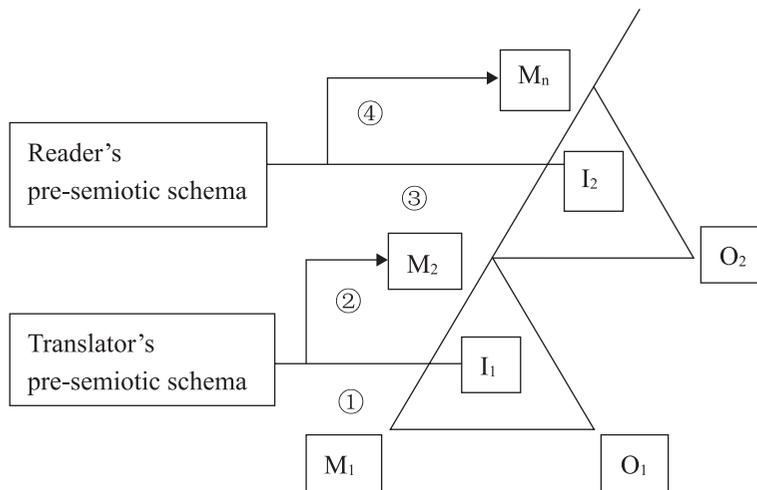
The historical background and life experiences of translators have a considerable bearing on the first semiosis of translation, because different pre-semiotic schemata of translators can give rise to the disparity of interim $1\frac{1}{2}$ semiotic systems. Richard Wilhelm and Arthur Waley have different ways of decoding the original text, e.g. the core concept "Tao". Besides, both of them have made some arbitrary interpretations of the original signs. In the second semiosis, translators blends their interim $1\frac{1}{2}$ semiotic system with the target language system. Arthur Waley and Richard Wilhelm have adopted different strategies to recode the target text. In what follows, we will see that the English and German versions of the *Tao Te Ching* have strikingly different styles. Yet, it is worth noting that Arthur Waley also thought highly of Richard Wilhelm's translation (Waley, 1982, p. 13). As a result, it is fairly difficult to discuss the influence of the German version on the pre-semiotic schema of the English translator.

4. Two Rounds of Semiosis and Growth of Signs in the Translations of *Tao Te Ching*

4.1 Decoding in the first semiosis

The translator must first blend his/her particular pre-semiotic schema with the semiotic system of source language, before arriving at an understanding of the ST. It is the precondition for the second integration of signs, through which the TT is ultimately formed. Accordingly, it is first and foremost for the translator to gain a reasonable understanding. As a renowned philosophical work, the *Tao Te Ching* bears profound philosophical and moral implications, which requires the translator to employ his/her positive pre-semiotic schema, so as to accomplish an integral and plausible translation.

4.1.1 Semantic decoding

To begin with, in order to accurately translate the ST, the translator should at least understand the verbal meanings of the ST correctly, which means, he/she should conquer the semantic challenges. The *Tao Te Ching* is abundant in abstruse and contradictory expressions, with plenty of metaphors, symbolizations as well as multi-vocal words. As written in classical Chinese, it is recondite even for the Chinese people to construe nowadays, let alone grammatical disparities between the Indo-European languages and Chinese. As a result, a competent translator for the *Tao Te Ching* should have a perfect mastery of classical Chinese and profound knowledge of oriental literature and philosophy. It is essential for the translator to be capable of deciding on a meaning that is a best fit for the lexical and cultural contexts.

Some scholars argue that Arthur Waley, to some extent, invents the Chinese poetry for the Western world based on his own cultural and aesthetic assumptions[2] (Holton, 2004, p. 18; Lin, 2015, p. 123). Wilhelm worked a long time in China as a missionary and studied from famous Chinese scholars, while Waley never visited the Far East in his whole life and studied Chinese classics by himself. Different life experiences could have helped built their different pre-semiotic schemata. Considering the technical constraints and historical conditions for the translators nearly a century ago, some translation errors are understandable. Here is an example of Waley's implausible translations due to his false interpretation/decoding. (The English translation of Wilhelm's version was provided by H. G. Ostwald in 1985):

> ST: 俗人昭昭，我独昏昏；俗人察察，我独闷闷。(Chapter 20)
> Waley: The world is full of people that shine; I alone am dark. They look lively and self-assured; I alone depressed.
> Wilhelm: Die Weltmenschen sind hell, ach so hell; nur ich bin wie trübe. Die Weltmenschen sind klug, ach so klug; nur ich bin wie verschlossen in mir. (Men of the world are shining, alas, so shining-bright; only I am as if turbid. Men of the world are so clever, alas, so clever; only I am as if locked into myself.)

Reduplicated adjectives "昭昭", "昏昏", "察察" and "闷闷" emphatically contrast two couples of men's psychology and personality. The first couple "昭昭" vs. "昏昏" have a radical in common, namely "日", and the latter "察察" vs. "闷闷" share a radical "门", both of which extend to the meaning of men's mood. According to Chen (1984, p. 144), "昭昭" literally means "bright and shining", manifesting one's intelligence, and "昏昏" means "dim and dark", insinuating one's ignorance and fatuity. The German word "hell" has meanings like "bright" and "intelligent", and "trübe" means "murky" or "gloomy" "bleak" in mood. The deeper implications of German words make Wilhelm's version more favorable than Waley's simple usage of "shine" and "dark". More importantly, "察察" is an expression of clearness and enlightenment, alluding one's insight and shrewdness out there. On the contrary, "闷闷" is interpreted as "locking one's heart inside the door", describing the manners such as introversion, slow-wittedness and clumsiness in view of Gu Zhengkun (2006, p. 55). Waley's translation of "察察" as "lively and self-assured" appears not as accurate as Wilhelm's "klug" (clever). Moreover, Wilhelm's translation of "闷闷" as " ich bin wie verschlossen in mir (I am as if locked into myself)" can reflect the iconic meaning of the radical sign of "门" more clearly than "depressed". In my view, Waley's minor deviation from the true meaning of the original can be attributed to his indiscernibleness of the designatum of classical Chinese adjectives.

4.1.2 Philosophical decoding

Undoubtedly, it is critical for the translators to be well acquainted with the author's philosophical thoughts as well as the ancient Chinese culture, in order to grasp the essence of the ST and concretize the aesthetic void. The core concept of the "Tao" is embedded and unfolded in the whole book. As a metaphysical existence, "Tao" serves as the underlying law of the universe, and once applied in daily life, it is embodied in "Te". Therefore, under no circumstances the translator can ignore the intrinsic relationship between these basic terms. As the unvarying topic of the 81 chapters, "Tao" should be regarded as the central concept that no sorts of translations are allowed to distort. When exploring the details, a qualified translator should never miss the bigger picture, i.e., the main theme of the whole book. Here is an example:

ST: 挫其锐，解其纷，和其光，同其尘，是谓玄同。(Chapter 56)
Waley: Let all sharpness be blunted, All tangles untied, All glare tempered. All dust smoothed. This is called the mysterious leveling.
Wilhelm: Man muss ... seinen Scharfsinn abstumpfen, seine wirren Gedanken auflösen, sein Licht mäßigen, sein Irdisches gemeinsam machen. Das heißt verborgene Gemeinsamkeit (mit dem SINN). (One must ... blunt one's sharp wit, dissolve one's confused thoughts, moderate one's light, make one's earthiness common. This means hidden community the TAO.)

Waley pursues literal translation, while Wilhelm offers a relatively free translation. Waley directly translates "锐", "纷", "光", "尘" as "sharpness", "tangles", "glare",

"dust". In the meanwhile, Wilhelm perceives "锐", "纷" and "光" as one's own wisdoms, thoughts and characters, which are to be abated and moderated. As for "尘", the two versions seem to give contrary interpretations. According to Chen (1984, p. 281), "尘" symbolizes the earthly underworld, but Waley's translation fosters the illusion that the existing world needs to be purified, while Wilhelm's rendition proclaims one's fusion with the outside world. Here, the most outstanding philosophical discrepancy lies in the translation of "玄同". Waley gives a reason for translating it as "the mysterious leveling" in his annotation: "In which there is a general perception not effected through particular sense" by quoting the *Liezi*: "Thereforeforward my eyes were one with my ears, my ears with my nose, my nose with my mouth." (Waley, 1958, p. 210) However, Wilhelm translates it as "verborgene Gemeinsamkeit mit dem Sinn", meaning "hidden mutuality with the TAO" (my translation), which is in alignment with Chen's (1984, p. 282) and other mainstream's interpretations.

As a matter of fact, "玄同" is a typical "void" for the readers to cultivate their aesthetic appreciations. At least, the character "同" has connotations such as "identification". Since the concept is based on "Tao", which is regarded as the origin of the universe and root of all things, the translator is not allowed to produce a random interpretation. The idea of "玄同" is further extended to the mutualism of "Tao": No difference exists between the opposite objects such as the good and the evil, the fortune and the misfortune. Everything is in its nature identical with one another. An individual should follow the natural way of "Tao", and mingle with the profane world. Waley's fallacy is caused by his imaginary interpretation. It is his lack of philosophical awareness that leads to the mistranslation of "玄同". Another example that demonstrates the philosophical differences between the two versions is also presented:

ST: 是以圣人被褐怀玉。(Chapter 70)
Waley: It is indeed in this sense that "the Sage wears hair-cloth on top, But carries jade under neath his dress".
Wilhelm: Darum geht der Berufene im härenen Gewand; aber im Busen birgt er ein Juwel. (Therefore the Man of Calling walks in haircloth but in his bosom he guards a jewel.)

Waley writes in the annotation of this chapter: "Rich people, in times of tumult, dressed up as peasants and hid their jade treasures under their clothes. Metaphorically 'to wear haircloth' etc., came to mean 'to hide one's light under a bushel', 'to keep one's knowledge to oneself' (Waley, 1958, p. 230)." The phrase "被褐怀玉" symbolizes the Taoist spirits of "humbleness", implying the similar idea as "同其尘". Yet, Wilhelm provides no notes for the literary allusion, without which the readers cannot digest the philosophical implications of "被褐怀玉". What he did was to add a note that unlike Confucians, Taoists are more unperturbed when misjudged or misunderstood (Wilhelm, 1985, p. 139), which is deficient in conveying the specific idea of the original text.

In a nutshell, we have discovered a need for establishing a semiotic paradigm in

translation. AlBzour (2015) holds that the totality of the signs and their semiotic analysis can overshadow the semantic interest, e.g. a proverb can only be decoded as long as it is approached as one sign as such. If these terms are decoded merely at the semantic level, the underlying meaning of philosophical signs can be lost or distorted. Consequently, the sign dynamism should be treated as a whole in translation.

4.2 Recoding in the second semiosis

4.2.1 Historical vs. scriptural, philological vs. literary

It is not until the completion of the second semiosis, namely the integration of the interim $1\frac{1}{2}$ semiotic system and the semiotic system of TL, that the TT takes the final shape. Hereby, it is the translator's motive that determines the individual manipulations in translation activities, incorporated in different choices of translation strategies and techniques.

In Arthur Waley's words, scriptures were "collections of symbols", featuring "a kind of magical elasticity". They could be "paraphrased in utterly different words", yet "for century upon century they continue to satisfy the wants of mankind". The distinction Waley wished to make was:

> … between translations which set out to discover what such books meant to start with, and those which aim only at telling the reader what such a text means to those who use it today. For want of better terms I call the first sort of translation "historical", the second "scriptural". (Waley, 1982, p. 12)

As a matter of fact, Waley's translation of the book is different from his other projects. He reconstructed the ancient book based on historical context in order to capture how it was received by the people during the time of its initial publication. In his opinion, "the most perfect example of a scriptural translation is the late Richard Wilhelm's version of the *I Ching (Book of Changes)*". Despite its failure of manifesting "what the book meant in the 10th century B.C.", it shows us "far more lucidly and accurately than any of its predecessors what it means to the average Far Eastern reader today" (Waley, 1982, p. 13). He was careful to put meaning above style in translations where meaning would be reasonably considered of more importance to the modern western readers. Furthermore, Waley admitted that the modern reader who want to read the ancient text for practical ends must look at the version of Richard Wilhelm, as in the preface of his book, *The Way and Its Power: A Study of the Tao Te Ching and Its Place in Chinese Thought*:

> There are several good "scriptural" translations of the *Tao Te Ching*. Here again I think Wilhelm's is the best… But there exists no "historical" translation; that is to say, no attempt to discover what the book meant when it was first written. That is what I have here tried to supply, fully conscious of the fact that to know what a scripture meant to begin with is perhaps

less important than to know what it means today. (ibid., p. 13)

In addition, Waley delineated another line between two sorts of translation, namely "literary" translation and "philological" translation. His translation of the *Tao Te Ching* was not literary in his own eyes, for the reason that the importance of the original lied not in its literary quality but in detailed accuracy. He provided both the translation and notes for those who have professional interest in Chinese studies, meanwhile, the appendices and the additional textual notes are intended for specialists (ibid., p. 14).

According to Reiter (1996, p. 282), "the activities of Sinologue like Wilhelm", on the other hand, were also based on "philologic work and techniques". However, his version is more reader-friendly, consisting of only a foreword, a succinct translation and some notes. In 1925, he added a commentary *The Teaching of Lao Zi*, aiming to illuminate what Tao means to Chinese culture. As for the reason why he translates "Tao" as "der Sinn" in German, Wilhelm explains in the foreword of his book *Laozi Tao te king: Das Buch vom Weg des Lebens*, "mainly due to aesthetic considerations" (Wilhelm, 1985, p. 3). Apparently, his goal is to produce a translation that makes sense to Germans, which must render his version less philological than Waley's.

Halliday (1978), on the other hand, claims that the semiotic results of providing footnotes, endnotes and annotations are disastrous "because the process of translation undergoes various stages of continuous interruption as well as a margin of inaccurate and erroneous effects that the text can create as unified and uninterrupted sign that resists intruding signs and that rejects dispersion". Similarly, Anderson (2003) points out a potential risk: Each sign affects and gets affected by its companions since translation is not a mere process of rewriting. Yet, AlBzour's (2015) argumentation seems more justifiable, as "an array of semiotic annotations of the ST must be aligned with and incorporated into basic morpho-syntactic notations, semantic denotations and social cultural connotations".

In the process of translating ancient Chinese into contemporary western language, Waley chooses to translate some particular Chinese words literally into their counterparts of TL, retaining as many Chinese characteristics as possible, for the purpose of producing a so-called "historical" translation. However, Wilhelm's version seemingly consists of less "foreign" components to his target readers by rendering the *Tao Te Ching* into concise and expressive German words.

Given the standpoints of both translators, it is quite reasonable to assume that different motives lead to different manipulations of signs. A reader-friendly translation might be remarkably different from an accurate version, and the notion of a "better version" depends on the purpose of the translation. In the following sections, I will demonstrate how different motives of translators give rise to different renditions, and in this particular case, Waley's historical/philological rendition will be analyzed in contrast with Wilhelm's scriptural/literary version.

4.2.2 Historical/scriptural recoding

In this section, different ways of recoding adopted by Waley and Wilhelm will be illustrated in what follows.

ST: 持而盈之，不如其已。揣而锐之，不可长保。(Chapter 9)

Waley: Stretch a bow to the very full, And you will wish you had stopped in time; Temper a sword-edge to its very sharpest, And you will find it soon grows dull.

Wilhelm: Etwas festhalten wollen und dabei es überfüllen: das lohnt der Mühe nicht. Etwas handhaben wollen und dabei es immer scharf halten: das lässt sich nicht lange bewahren. (To hold on to something and thereby make it overflow: this is not worthwhile. To make use of something and still keep it sharp: this cannot be sustained for long.)

Herein, Waley describes such a situation for "持而盈之": "stretch a bow to the very full". In the annotation of this chapter, Waley writes: "The expression used can also apply to filling a vessel to the brim; but 'stretching a bow' makes a better parallel to 'sharpening a sword'" (Waley, 1958, p. 152). The idea is coherent with the foregoing concept of "道冲而用之或不盈", warning people against over-manipulation and self-conceitedness. Unlike Waley, Wilhelm does not seek for the initial meanings but rather grasp the gist, namely the paradox of catch and release.

ST: 执古之道，以御今之有。(Chapter 14)

Waley: Yet by seizing on the Way that was. You can ride the things that are now.

Wilhelm: Wenn man festhält den SINN des Altertums, um zu beherrschen das Sein von heute. (If one holds fast to the DAO of antiquity in order to master today's existence...)

According to Zhou (Zhou, 2007, p. 19), the character "御" means "to drive", and "to control", and "有" indicates "concrete things". Clearly, Waley translates this sentence almost word for word, e.g. "seize on the Way that was" and "ride the things that are now". On the other hand, Wilhelm pursues a less philological translation, using "den Sinn festhalten des Altertums" (grasp the ancient Meaning) and "das Sein beherrschen von heute" (master today's existence). The similar cases can also be found in "揣而锐之，不可长保", "善言无瑕谪", "使有什伯之器而不用": Waley focuses more on the original semantics, while Wilhelm emphasizes the coherence and fluency of syntactic structure.

These examples have vividly showcased the translators' different motives during the second semiosis. Waley's translations stated his intention in the very first place, i.e., to produce a historical translation that captures how the original was received by the people during the time of its initial publication. In my view, in order to retain the historical elements and detailed accuracy, Waley has to compromise some scriptual quality in his translation. Because of the scriptual feature of Wilhelm's translation, it is more difficult for readers to reconstrue the historical significances of the *Tao Te Ching* in ancient China.

4.2.3 Literary/philological recoding

Like some other scriptures, the *Tao Te Ching* is rhythmical and chantable. The rhetoric vehicles adopted such as antithesis, symmetry, parallelism and repetition, and the occasional end rhymes in each chapter contribute to the literary characteristics of the *Tao Te Ching*, thus in the process of translation, a qualified translator would not ignore the role of the metrical style of the ST. These who can bring the charm of the Chinese classic poetry into full play would definitely add more aesthetic values to the original. Waley prioritizes the meaning of the original rather than its literary form, in other words, he prefers "philological" translation to "literary" translation, attenuating the formal style of the *Tao Te Ching*. By combining short sentences with long ones and arranging them freely and disorderly, he translates the text in a prose style. Moreover, many sentences translated by Waley are out of rhyme, so most formal characteristics of the Chinese classic are lost in his rendition. On the other hand, Wilhelm seems to focus more on the forms as opposed to Waley's prose translation, imitating the formal style of the ST. The German version is neat and concise, closer to the original, even with end-rhymes in some chapters. Besides, since many paragraphs are clearly divided, it is more convenient for readers to comprehend the text. Now let's take a look at the following example:

> <u>ST</u>: 天得一以清，地得一以灵，神得一以宁，谷得一以盈，万物得一以生，侯王得一以为天下贞，其致之一也。(Chapter 39)
>
> <u>Waley</u>:
>
> As for the things that from of old have understood the Whole —
>
> The sky through such understanding remains limpid,
>
> Earth remains steady,
>
> The spirits keep their holiness,
>
> The abyss is replenished,
>
> The ten thousand creatures bear their kind,
>
> Barons and princes direct their people.
>
> It is the Whole that causes it.
>
> <u>Wilhelm</u>:
>
> Der Himmel **erlangte das Eine und wurde** rein.
>
> Die Erde **erlangte das Eine und wurde** fest.
>
> Die Götter **erlangten das Eine und wurden** mächtig.
>
> Das Tal **erlangte das Eine und** erfüllte sich.
>
> Alle Dinge **erlangten das Eine und** entstanden.
>
> Könige und Fürsten **erlangten das Eine**
>
> **und wurden** das Vorbild der Welt.
>
> Das alles ist durch das Eine bewirkt.

The differences in literary characteristics between the two versions are self-evident. Waley's version seems rather lengthy and complex, while Wilhelm's rendition looks very

orderly and parallel just as the original text. The original text uses the same verb-object framework "得一以", so does the German rendition. The German counterpart is namely "enlangen das Eine und warden/(verb)", which means to "attain the one and become/(verb)". Therefore, Wilhelm totally retains the word order and syntactic structure of the original, and successfully uses repetitions and parallelism in his translation, which is faithful and understandable. Wilhelm's version is almost in accordance with the original in light of word order and preserves the rhetorical device of parallelism. Wilhelm's version has preserved the literary characteristics of the *Tao Te Ching*.

On the other hand, Waley's rendition seems rather philological and prosaic, consisting of both long and short sentences. All the short sentences share the same syntactic structure of a simple sentence, so they seem quite impressive and vivid. Waley breaks down the original sentence structure which has completely lost the compact and powerful style of the ST. Moreover, Waley always stands against the application of rhyme in translating metrical verses and classic poetry. Like Waley puts it, "If one uses rhyme, it is impossible not to sacrifice sense to sound", and "the restriction of rhyme necessarily injure either the vigor of one's language or the literalness of one's version".[3] Admittedly, it remains difficult for the translator to get the best of both semantic/syntax and phonetics. The evaluation of a translation depends on its purpose, and herein, Waley's motive in the second integration of his horizon and the TT's horizon is to pursue an accurate and philological translation.

In all, the translator's socio-cultural and historical background has a significant impact on the TT. Yet, the translator's interpretation is restricted by the signs of ST. Taoism is a complete and mature philosophical system, independent from other Chinese ideological systems. Any translation of the *Tao Te Ching* should be based on the system. Otherwise, the TT, such as many sentences from Waley's and Wilhelm's versions, is likely to deviate from the original, due to false decoding after the first semiosis, while in the second semiosis, different motives lead to different ways of recoding.

5. Conclusion

This article has presented an analysis of Arthur Waley's English and Richard Wilhelm's German version of the *Tao Te Ching* from the perspective of translation semiotics. Two integrations of signs are involved in the process of translation: the first integration between the pre-semiotic schema of translator and the semiotic system of ST, and the second integration of the interim $1\frac{1}{2}$ semiotic system (the result of the first semiosis) and the semiotic system of TL. The signs of ST are relatively static and motionless; however, the translator's schema is ever-changing, in that it serves as an intermediary between the ST and that of TL, considerably influencing the final formation of the TT. The translator should always broaden his/her pre-semiotic schema from the "vantage point", and effectively blends his/her pre-semiotic schema with the signs of SL and TL, so as to provide a reasonable rendition under cross-cultural circumstances.

Chinese Classics, such as the *Tao Te Ching*, with their profound thoughts and ambiguous expressions, not to mention the fact that scholars still hotly debate on intralingual interpretation, remain an arduous task for the translators. Translators are required to employ their legitimate pre-semiotic schemata to concretize the aesthetic void and fill in the semiotic gap between the oriental and occidental cultures. In the first semiosis, the translator should gain an accurate understanding of ST which is a prerequisite for the accurate conveyance of that understanding into the TT. Richard Wilhelm and Arthur Waley both misunderstood some parts of the original text. Yet, in my opinion, staying in China for a long time and learning from Chinese scholars in person might help Wilhelm attain a deeper understanding of Chinese philosophy. In the second semiosis, the translator establishes a motive after the actual contact with ST, and blends his/her interim $1\frac{1}{2}$ semiotic system with the semiotic system of TL, in order to recode the signs of the TT. Waley singled out his own translation by explaining the motive to produce a historical and philological rendition, almost abandoning formal characteristics, while Wilhelm's version is scriptural and less philological, preserving more stylistic and literary features.

Understanding is a never-ending task, and philosophical classics like the *Tao Te Ching* are open to interpretation by different generations. The semiotic shift in translation studies provides us with a dynamic and holistic view, manifesting translation as a process of sign interaction and growth. It serves as a rationale for treating the whole text as a sign within a wider semiosphere, i.e. the Chinese culture, in the translation of Chinese Classics. It is essential for the translators to attach equal importance to both verbal and non-verbal signs, because translation is, in its own right, an endless semiosis of multimodal communication.

Notes

1   According to Evangelos Kourdis (2015, pp. 307-316), "we also notice that there is no established term of this field, but that there are many terms to describe more or less the same approach. Nevertheless, if we consider the fact that a large part of academic output in this area is produced by researchers of the semiotic school of Moscow-Tartu, it seems that the two dominant terms in English are semiotics of translation and translation semiotics," and "more recently, the last issue of the journal Sign System Studies (2012) adopts the term semiotics of translation. This is an indication that this term tends to become dominant."

2   In *Towards a Study of Arthur Waley and China*, John de Gruchy writes: "…most of them focus on the work and activities of Ezra Pound, with passing references to Waley, Lowell and Bynner, who are seen as successors of Pound. The idea that it was Ezra Pound who was 'the inventor of Chinese poetry' in the early modern period was first put forward by T. S. Eliot in his 1928 introduction to Pound's Selected Poems (Eliot 15). Ezra Pound, Arthur Waley, and Amy Lowell were all influential … [but] because Pound himself influenced Waley and Lowell and was by far the more original poetic intelligence." (http://www.k-junshin.ac.jp/juntan/libhome/bulletin/No38/de_Gruchy.pdf)

As in *The Chinese Poem: The Visible and the Invisible in Chinese Poetry* (Manoa—

Volume 12, Number 1, 2000, pp. 139-146), "Eliot clearly recognized the creative transformation involved in translating poetry from one language to another, Therefore his distinction between Pound's translation and 'Chinese poetry-in-itself'. Although it is well known that Pound's translation is a particularly free, often ingenious rendition of the Chinese—fully justified in view of his Imagist project—what neither he nor Eliot could have foreseen was how powerful and lasting this translation would be in shaping poets' and translators' perceptions of Chinese poetry." (http://muse.jhu.edu/login?uri=/journals/manoa/v012/12.1yeh.html)

Patrick Bridgwater states in Arthur Waley and Brecht, which is collected in the *German Life and Letters* (Volume 17, Issue 3, pp. 216-232) in 2007: "…most people would now say that it is rather Arthur Waley who has been the 'inventor of Chinese poetry for our time'."

3   Drawn from the Introduction of "我对杜诗英译的管见——《英译杜甫律诗十首兼谈体会》" [My Views on the English Translations of Du Fu's Poems—Ten English Renditions of Du Fu's Regulated Verses and My Thoughts—My translation] by Zhang Xueqing. http://www.fengtipoeticclub.com/z110811/z110811-k005.html

Acknowledgements

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