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STUDIES OF PENGUIN CLASSIC *Ta Hsüeh* FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF TRANSLATION  
NORMS

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ABSTRACT

As one of the Confucian Four Books, the *Daxue* has played an important role in shaping the spirit of the Chinese people. The Penguin Classics edition, *Ta Hsüeh*, (transl. A. H. Plaks, 2003) provides a new interpretation for modern times. Following the concept of the expectancy and professional norms, as proposed by Chesterman, this paper investigates the norms embodied in Plaks' translation. This study establishes that Plaks' translation is a reader-friendly version that helps to disseminate Chinese culture to the world, and that it conforms to the expectations of 21st-century general English readers, as well as to professional norms. With its precise depiction of historical context, its strategy of cross-cultural interpretation, and its abundant background information, this Penguin Classics edition of the *Daxue* gives western readers a glimpse into the wisdom of the ancient Chinese classics. This case study shows that when translating the ancient Chinese classics for the educated western reader, a so-called 'thick translation' is to be preferred, that is to say, one with many annotations and glosses.

**Key words:** translation norms; *Ta Hsüeh*; Penguin Classics; thick translation

I . Introduction

Originally, the *Daxue* was a chapter from the *Liji* (*Records on Rites*) compiled in Han Dynasty of ancient China. Zhu Xi, a Confucian scholar from Song Dynasty, extracted it from the *Liji* and listed it as one of the Four Books (the *Mencius*, the *Lunyu*, the *Daxue*, the *Zhongyong*). In the following centuries, the *Daxue* has held an important position in the ancient civil service examinations. Zhu Xi viewed it as the most important book from which one could learn about Confucianism. The author of the *Daxue* is said to be Zengzi, a disciple of Confucius. However, there is not enough evidence to support this claim. The *Daxue* teaches people how to display perfect and enlightened virtue through self-cultivation. This process includes four steps: the investigation of things, the extension of knowledge, making one's will sincere and rectifying one's mind. For people from all walks of life, self-cultivation is the top priority. The goal of ethical education is to be a noble man, a paragon of virtue. Such a man will exemplify his virtue, then he can guide others to manifest their own virtue. The highest goal to be achieved by the noble man is the peace and order of the whole world based on "li" (traditions about rites and

political system). In other words, he who achieves this goal is able to do things in the proper way, so as to rule the country and the world peacefully.

Although the text of the *Daxue* is slim, with its profound connotations, it has had an enormous influence throughout Chinese history. Also, the political wisdom and the way of self-cultivation that it contains are worth sharing with the whole world. The ancient Chinese classics are the crystallization of Chinese culture, as they embody the values and wisdom of Chinese. They have vitality, and they can be passed from generation to generation. Their appeal lies partly in that the understanding of any particular classic may vary from reader to reader. More importantly, these ancient Chinese classics can be interpreted under new circumstances, which in turn enriches their connotations. For this reason, many ancient Chinese classics are still worth studying today. So more research is needed about how to translate and disseminate traditional Chinese culture to the world.

Scholars noticed the value of the *Daxue*, and several of them translated it into English. In his English version of 1816, James Legge commented that the work taught the reader how to be a virtuous man. David Collie (1828) translated the Four Books from a missionary's perspective. Gu Hongming (1915) also translated the *Daxue*, observing that the work focused on the nobility, and discussed the relationship between self-cultivation and the governance of the country and the world. In his *The Wisdom of Confucius* (1938), Lin Yutang argued that the *Daxue* was a logical and coherent essay. In his *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (1963), Wing-Tsit Chan stated that "The eight steps (of self-cultivation) are the blueprints for translating humanity into actual living, carefully maintaining the balance and harmony of the individual on the one side and society on the other." (Chan, 1963, 84) Ian Johnston and Wang Ping (2012) published the *Daxue and Zhongyong: Bilingual Edition*, which contains a detailed exploration of the *Daxue*. In 2003, Plaks completed the Penguin Classics edition, which is the focus of this paper. Penguin is a world-renowned publishing house, with high requirements for its works. As there were already many translations of the *Daxue*, why didn't Penguin just republish one of those? Why did Penguin invite Plaks to create a new English version?

In the last fifteen years, scholars have studied the translations of the *Daxue* from various perspectives, such as the translation strategy used, and the reception of the translated works, and have drawn comparisons between the different versions. Wang Hui and Ye Lamei (2008) studied the literal translation strategy in Robert Morrison's version of the *Daxue*, then investigated the role of translation in the construction of Confucian images in the colonial era. Hou Jian (2019) analyzed the English translation version of the *Daxue* by British sinologist Ernest R. Hughes and found that he paid more attention to similarities between Chinese and Western philosophy, thus adopting a strategy of domestication to make Chinese philosophy acceptable to a western audience. Fang Meizhen (2011) compared the translation strategies of four English versions of the *Daxue*. In his doctoral dissertation, Guo Lei (2014) evaluated the early English version of the Four Books by David Collie (1828) from several points of view, and from a historical context. For example, Guo found that the original meaning was expressed faithfully through Collie's efforts. Some researchers began with the reception of these English versions, then explored the translators' behavior. Yuan Xiaoliang (2016) studied Ernest Hughes' version of the *Daxue* in terms of Chesterman's translation ethic theory, and concluded that Hughes is a great cross-cultural communicator. Chris Murray (2015) analyzed the impact of two versions of the *Daxue*, as translated by Joshua Marshman and Robert Morrison respectively, on Sino-British politics from 1809 to 1814.

In conclusion, much research has focused on the impact of the *Daxue* on foreign countries and on China itself, revealing the power of translation to construct or deconstruct certain images in the target culture. The translation strategy and the translator's approach are also worth studying, as these can be considered in several ways, providing insights into the dissemination of the translation in question, and reception of the work. Translators sometimes have to take certain steps or adopt certain strategies in order to promote the understanding and reception of their work. Although some papers concern the translation of the *Daxue*, no research has been done on Plaks' version of the *Daxue*, as it is a new translation that has appeared in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

This study uses Chesterman's theory of translation norms as a theoretical framework to analyze the translation norm and translator's approach in Plaks' version of the *Daxue*. Various social and cultural factors are

taken into account, so as to better understand the translation norms embodied in the work. Finally, by collecting data, such as readers' book reviews on Internet websites and book reviews by critics, this study assesses the dissemination and reception of the *Daxue* in English-speaking countries.

## II. Andrew Chesterman's Theory of Translation Norms

The word "norm" derives from sociology. Jiří Levý (1969) first used it in connection with translation studies. Levý elaborated the decision problems caused by practical reasoning in the translation process, and was the first to apply sociological analytical methods in translation research. James Holmes (1988) divided translation studies into three groups: descriptive, theoretical, and applied. Gideon Toury (1980) developed the notion of the norm and put forward theory of norms. Toury thought that norms could govern social behavior and that they could also make predictions about certain types of behavior. Toury's theory of translation norms consists of three parts: preliminary norms, initial norms, and operational norms. Its purpose is to describe, explain, and predict translation behavior and phenomena related to translated works. So Toury's work belongs to the group of descriptive translation studies. Preliminary norms include translation policy and the directness of translation. Translation policy refers to the choice of works (of authors, genres, schools, etc.) to be translated, and the directness of the translation refers to the tolerance for translating from a translation that is already in another language, rather than from the ultimate source text (Toury 1995: 58). Initial norms refer to the fact that the translator may have to balance the translated work's adequacy (or faithfulness to the original) and its acceptability, as some alterations may be made by translators to render the work more acceptable in the target culture. Operational norms refer to direct decisions made during the translating process.

In 1998, a conference entitled "Translation and Norms" was held at Aston University, in the United Kingdom, and many of the scholars mentioned above attended it. Since that time, the discussion of translation norms has been heated. Chesterman (2016) put forward his translation norms theory, based on the work of earlier scholars, in which he was influenced considerably by the concept of the "meme" from communication science. A meme is a unit that connotes cultural ideas, such as gestures or tunes that can be transmitted from one mind to another, by imitation. Some people believe that, just as genes can explain evolution, the meme can provide an explanation for cultural evolution in human society. Chesterman incorporated the idea of the meme into translation studies. He proposed that translation memes "encapsulate concepts and ideas about translation itself, and about the theory of translation" (Chesterman, 2016: 3). In Chesterman's theory, if a particular meme comes to dominate people's minds (for any reason: practical, political, cultural, aesthetic, etc.), and other competing memes fade, one course of development is that such a meme will be regarded as a norm, whether it is imposed by an authority, or simply accepted as such (Chesterman, 2016: 49).

Chesterman believed that, in most cases, norms have two functions. Firstly, "they make life easier, saving both time and energy. Secondly, they function as expectations, to predict the future, and hence act rationally" (Chesterman, 2016: 53). He saw norms as being validated by a norm authority (such as teachers, literary critics, revisers, and so on), and by their existence. Also, norms are not static. They can change over time, because of different social or cultural conditions. Two kinds of norms are included in his theory: expectancy norms and professional norms. Expectancy norms govern professional norms because "Any process norm is determined by the nature of the end-product which it is designed to lead to" (Chesterman, 2016: 65).

Expectancy norms are established by the expectations of readers of a translation (of a given type) concerning what a translation (of this type) should be like. Readers (who may or may not include the client) may have expectations about the type of text and discourse conventions, about style and register, about the appropriate degree of grammaticality, about the statistical distribution of text features of all kinds, about collocations, lexical choice, and so on (Chesterman, 2016: 62). Expectancy norms are influenced by the prevalent translation tradition in the target culture. And parallel texts (of a similar type of text) in the target language are also a contributing factor. Also, economic or ideological factors, power relations within and between cultures and the like can also have an impact on expectancy norms of a certain time within a culture. We can make evaluations about a translated work's appropriateness, according to expectancy norms. If the translated work conforms to expectancy norms, it is more likely to be accepted by readers in the target culture.

Professional norms refer to “the translational behavior of the professional subset from which we derive the process norms of translation” (Chesterman, 2016: 66). Professional norms greatly influence the practical translation process. According to Chesterman, professional norms can be classified into three kinds: the accountability norm, the communication norm and the relation norm. The accountability norm means that a translator should meet the demands of loyalty “with regard to the original writer, the commissioner of the translation, the translator himself or herself, the prospective readership and any other relevant parties.” (Chesterman, 2016: 66). However, when confronting conflicts in the translation process, if the translator cannot meet the demands of loyalty to all parties, he will need to compromise. The translator should therefore consider which party should be prioritized. The communication norm refers to the fact that the translator is a cross-cultural communicator between the source culture and the target culture. Ideally, the translator should optimize communication between the two cultures, according to different situations. Therefore, some translation strategies will be used to facilitate communication. With the occurrence of the cultural turn in translation studies in the 1990s, researchers started to focus on the communicative effects achieved by translation. In addition, the social, cultural and historical factors that influence the translation process are being explored, so as to find reasonable explanations for translators’ behavior and better understand them. The relation norm is unique to the translation process. Here, the traditional literal equivalence should be abandoned. This means that there should be an appropriate similarity between the source text and the target text. Every translation task sets its own profile of “equivalence priorities”, such as the equivalence/similarity of style or semantics between the two texts. The expectancy norms and professional norms are useful in guiding translation. If the translated text conforms to the two norms, it is more likely to achieve the purpose of translation.

### III. The Study of *Ta Hsüeh* from the Perspective of Translation Norms

In this part, the Penguin Classics edition *Ta Hsüeh* will be analyzed from the perspective of translation norms. The linguistic features of *the Daxue* will be discussed in order to establish whether the translation matches the expectancy norms of general readers in the 21st century. The professional norms embodied in *Ta Hsüeh* can be revealed by the textual evidence.

#### 1. Expectancy norms of *Ta Hsüeh* in the 21st century

In the 1930s, with the appearance of its inexpensive paperbacks, Penguin Books revolutionized publishing. Penguin Books has also had a significant impact on public debate in Britain, through its books on politics, arts and science. Penguin Books has published the *Mencius* in 1970 and Confucius’s *Analects* in 1979, then *Ta Hsüeh and Chung Yung (The Highest Order of Cultivation and On the Practice of the Mean)* translated by Andrew H. Plaks came out in the year of 2003, following the popular demand by readers, thus completing the inclusion of the Four Books of the Confucian tradition in the Penguin Classics. As mentioned above, factors that determine expectancy norms can be mainly classified into three categories, namely, the prevalent translation tradition in the target culture, and parallel texts (of a similar text-type) in the target language, that is to say by the prevalent scenes and frames in the target culture, by economic or ideological factors, and by power relations within and between cultures. There is no doubt that the Four Books published by Penguin Books are closely related to each other, in that they are parallel texts. For example, in the *Mencius* and the *Analects*, translators use the Wade-Giles romanization system, while some Chinese characters in *Ta Hsüeh and Chung Yung* are also transcribed using Wade-Giles, as the *Ta Hsüeh* is one of the Four Books. This conforms to its translation tradition, regardless of the prevalence of Pinyin romanization in the 21st century.

Since Chinese is a parataxis language, which focuses on coherence in meaning, and the logical relationship between sentences does not depend on cohesive devices, readers need to understand the logical relationship of the text. English, on the other hand, is a metamorphic language, which emphasizes coherence in form and the logical relationship between sentences, and texts depend on coherence devices, such as lexical and discourse coherence, so that the logical relationship within the text is more obvious. In translating the *Ta Hsüeh* into English, Plaks notices the difference between the two languages, and as a result, in the translation, many logical connectors have been added. For example, take this sentence:

子曰：「听讼，吾犹人也。必也，使无讼乎？」无情者，不得尽其辞，大畏民志。此谓知本。(Zhu Xi, 1933: 6)

Translation: The Master has stated: 'As a judge hearing litigation, one should put oneself in the place of others. As a matter of categorical principle, however, one should act so as to eliminate litigation altogether.' In this way, men who are bereft of the truth will be in no position to present arguments interminably and one can, accordingly, instill awe for justice in the hearts of the people. (Plaks, 2003: 9)

Here "As a matter of categorical principle" is added by the translator, to remind readers that the elimination of litigation is a governor's responsibility. In the source text, however, there are no logical connectors in the sentence. In Plaks' English translation, "In this way" and "accordingly" appear to indicate the logic relationships. These logical connectives can help readers figure out the connotations in this sentence. That is, if one can eliminate litigation, no one will dare to speak nonsense in the court, so as to instill awe for justice in people's hearts. In addition, to avoid repetition, Plaks uses abbreviations and synonyms.

Also, many narrative subjects are added, to meet the grammatical requirements of the English language. For example:

《诗》云：“穆穆文王，於缉熙敬止。” 为人君，止于仁；为人臣，止于敬；为人子，止于孝，...。(Zhu Xi, 1933: 5)

Translation:

In the words of the Songs: "How august and splendid was King Wen; yet, he caused the light of his virtue to shine without surcease; he found his point of rest in deepest reverence." Thus we see that he who fulfills his role as a ruler of men finds his point of rest in human kindness; he who fulfills his role in his ruler's service rests in reverential devotion; he who fulfills his role as his father's son rests in filial respect... (Plaks, 2003: 8)

This sentence describes how King Wen, whose power is infinite, taught people to fulfill their roles in different positions. In the source text, the second sentence has no subject, so in English, the translator Plaks adds the subject "he" to reduce the reading difficulty caused by language differences, and to help his readers better understand the text. In these two examples, by adding a large number of coherence devices and narrative subjects, Plaks converts the Chinese stylistic feature, which emphasizes vagueness and simplicity, into the English one, which emphasizes logic and rationality. As a result, Plaks' English version of the *Daxue* is fluent and easy to read, and conforms to expectancy norms of the target English readers.

One stylistic feature of the source text of the *Daxue* is the use of parallel clauses. As stated in the Penguin Classics edition, in the introductory material before the text, "a system of indentation has been adopted to set off parallel sequences - whether separate clauses or complete sentences - on the model of the setting of lines of verse in books of poetry. This has meant using variable margins to avoid conflicting with the conventional indentations of paragraph heads, quotations and the like - particularly in those cases where one set of parallel clauses comes in the middle of another parallel sequence" (Plaks, 2003: xxxix). By using indentation and variable margins, Plaks retains the parallel mode of expression, a feature of Chinese philosophical discourse. This format also coincides with the discourse conventions in the English reader's mind. Generally speaking, therefore, the Penguin Classics version of the *Daxue* conforms to the expectancy norms of its target readers. Take this parallel clause, for example:

康诰曰：“克明德。”大甲曰：“顾是天之明命。”帝典曰：“克明峻德。”皆自明也。(Zhu Xi, 1933: 5)

Translation:

It is said in the 'Announcement to the Lord of K'ang': '[King Wen] succeeded in causing the light of his moral force to shine forth'.

It is said in the 'Admonition to Tai-chia': '[King Tang] set his eyes upon affirming the shining decree of Heaven'.

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It is said in the 'Canon of the Great Ancestor': '[Yao] succeeded in causing the light of his towering moral force to shine forth'. (Plaks, 2003: 7)

Here, the author of the *Daxue* teaches that the power of self-cultivation comes from within, from our own hearts. The translation is faithful to the stylistic feature of the source text because it uses the same format as the source, the parallel clauses. Also, the translator has used indentation, and readers will easily notice this layout, which will bring to mind the parallel clauses of the original text of the *Daxue*.

## 2. Professional norms of *Ta Hsüeh*, as translated by Plaks

Plaks, as a sinologist, is interested in many aspects of Chinese culture, and he is an expert in Chinese narratology. While reading *A Dream of Red Mansions* (Hongloumeng), Plaks found that the *Daxue* occupied an important position in Chinese children's study and growth, which aroused his interest in the *Daxue*. Later, he was invited by Penguin to translate this book. The length of Plaks' version of the *Daxue* far exceeds that of the source text. It can be said that this version is typical of thick translation. The term "thick translation" was put forward by Kwame Anthony Appiah. "Thick translation is a translation that seeks with its annotations and its accompanying glosses to locate the text in a rich cultural and linguistic context." (Appiah, 1993: 817). Thick translation is a good way of cultural representation by supplementing background information and other materials. When using a thick translation, readers can have a more comprehensive understanding of the text and its culture. It also shows the subjectivity of the translator, because much material is added by the translator himself.

Two reasons account for the thick translation of the *Ta Hsüeh*. First, this new version has a more objective point of view, its main purpose being to facilitate cultural communication between the source and the target cultures. The target readers of Penguin Classics are mainly general readers. Many of the ancient Chinese classics are difficult to understand, especially for general western readers. So a great deal of background information, such as Introduction, Preface, Reader's Note, etc. has been added in this version, to help readers better understand the meaning of the original text. Second, the Penguin Classics edition of the *Daxue* is a reinterpretation and a re-translation in the 21st century. Thanks to the advancement of Chinese society, its global status has improved a lot especially since the beginning of the 21st century. While working on his translation, Plaks would certainly have consulted previous English versions. More importantly, he tries to place the text in its historical context and strives to preserve the true sense of the original Chinese. This process substantially increases the length of his translation.

### (1) The Accountability norm

The accountability norm means that a translator should be loyal to all parties involved in the translation process: the original author, the commissioner of the translation, the modern-day readers, and so on. However, in most cases, when the translator cannot meet all these demands, he or she needs to consider which of the parties should be prioritized. In his translation of the *Daxue*, Plaks conforms to the accountability norm. In the prefatory section "A Note on the Translations", Plaks states that his translation will be based on Zhu Xi's approach to annotating the *SiShuZhangJu*. There are two reasons for the translation of this title. First, some alterations and divisions made by Zhu Xi made it much easier for readers to understand the structural logic of the *Daxue*. Second, since it came out eight hundred years ago, Zhu Xi's book has been an authority on Chinese culture. Plaks makes it clear that his translation is based on Zhu Xi's version, and that he intends to be faithful to the readers and considers their way of thinking. In his Introduction, Plaks praises the charm and value of the *Daxue* and of Chinese culture, and this shows the trust he places in both the author and the text. According to Plaks, "through the remaining thousand years of Chinese dynastic history, these slim volumes occupied the vital core of the intellectual patrimony shared by all members of the vast empire's educated elite." (Plaks, 2003: xxvii)

Plaks' translation strategies and the characteristics of his version are introduced in the section "A Note on the Translations", as well as additions to the source text, and some alterations made by him. Plaks affirms that during the translation process he will not make any changes without informing the readers and the commissioner of the translation. He will be loyal to both the author of the source text and target readers. There

are many examples of additions in the text. For example, to convey the multiple meanings of the Chinese culture-loaded words, Plaks uses a strategy of cross-cultural interpretation, inserting additional words to convey the meaning. This will be explained in more detail below, when we discuss the communication norm.

Finally, in the “Reader’s Notes” appendix, Plaks gives further explanations for his translation, which provide evidence of his conscientious attitude, and of his trustworthiness as a translator. For example, in the case of the phrase “在新民” in the first sentence of the *Daxue* in Zhu Xi’s version, Plaks gives a detailed explanation of the character “新” and of how he decided to translate it. Firstly, he knew that in the original version of the *Daxue* in the Liji, it is “在亲民” not Zhu Xi’s “在新民”. After his own research, Plaks believes that, according to the structural logic, the “treatise is divided into a series of ‘expansion chapters’, each anchored in the precise wording of its topic in the opening chapter” (Plaks, 2003: 61-62). Therefore, it should be translated as “bringing the people to a state of renewal” (Plaks, 2003: 5). Plaks made these difficult choices after careful consideration, and we can see that he is loyal to the original writer, the text, and the translation commissioner, as well as to his readers in the target culture. Meanwhile, both the readers and the publisher both can trust him as a translator, because of his professional knowledge.

## (2) The Communication norm

The early 1990s saw a cultural change in translation studies. Researchers in the field began to pay more attention to the social, cultural and historical factors that affect the translation process, and to explore the communication effects of translation, in order to explain the decisions made by translators. As a translator, Plaks gives full play to his role as a cross-cultural coordinator. Actually, his *Ta Hsueh* and *Chung Yung* is the work of two scholars. Yao Xinzong, a renowned Chinese scholar, wrote a preface, while Plaks translated and annotated the text. Chinese scholar Yao Xinzong, who has a good grasp of both Chinese and Western cultures, was invited by Plaks to write the preface, in order to clarify the text and increase the number of potential readers. Yao Xinzong is a well-known scholar in both China and Britain, so seeing his name associated with this work might persuade readers who are interested in Chinese culture to read this version. With Plaks’ translation strategy of cross-cultural interpretation, the rich cultural connotations can be more clearly conveyed. The two scholars cooperated in this work, and their contributions are aimed at effectively communicating the material and the context of the original.

An overview of the *Daxue* and *Chung Yung* and an account of the historical development Confucianism are included in the preface, so that readers can have a general background understanding. Plaks gives a concise summary: “the *Ta Hsueh* concentrates on the social and political dimensions of human experience, drawing upon ancient and contemporary practices to establish an idealized political programme, based on individuals’ moral cultivation, that is believed to bring about peace and harmony naturally in the world” (Plaks, 2003, Preface x). His collaborator Yao also demonstrates a deep understanding of the essence of Chinese culture. Take, for example, the Chinese character “学” (“hsüeh”). According to Yao’s explanation, in Confucianism, “hsüeh” has three meanings. “Firstly, Confucian learning is a life-long process of personal transformation. Secondly, the chief purpose of Confucian learning is to accomplish the perfection of individual character, or to make individuals great. Thirdly, the greatness of Confucian learning lies in its combination of personal achievement and universal application” (Plaks, 2003: xiii). This also helps readers of the translation to grasp the essential characteristics of Chinese culture. From this we can see that “hsüeh” refers not only to the learning of knowledge, but also the cultivation of an individual’s character. Through “hsüeh”, the individual can exert his intelligence and virtue in society, and contribute to building a society with high ethical standards.

Plaks believes that Confucianism has a deep concern for humanity, which implies that in Chinese culture, ordinary people have quite a high status. Confucianism is not a religion. Instead, encoded in it are profound ethical and political messages. Plaks writes that for modern people, the value of *the Daxue* lies in how to promote the spiritual and moral dignity of human beings, by following the Way of Heaven, rather than demean it, as happens in some theistic cultures. For the modern reader, *the Daxue* teaches people that they can control their destiny, rather than give it to spiritual beings or transcendental powers. They are determined to demonstrate what humans themselves can do to fulfill their own providential destiny.

In translating the *Daxue*, Plaks demonstrates his cross-cultural awareness. He translates some Chinese characters with deep cultural connotations by way of cross-cultural interpretation. That is, to convey the meanings of words laden with Chinese culture, he inserts additional words, so that for his modern audience, the translated English text reads smoothly and naturally. Take, for example, the translation of the title “大学” (*Daxue*). In earlier translations, the title was rendered by phrases such as the *Great Learning* (James Legge, 1869), the *Great Digest* (Ezra Pound, 1951), *Higher Education* (Ku Hung-Ming, 1915). Plaks translates the title as the *Ta Hsüeh: The Highest Order of Cultivation*. He does this for two reasons. On the one hand, he believes that the purpose of the key concept of “hsüeh” is to perfect the individual’s character and to instruct him in governing the people. The word “cultivation” reflects New Confucianism’s practice-oriented thinking. So the purpose of this work is to tell people how to learn (the “hsüeh” of the title), because people can be cultivated to be virtuous and capable. On the other hand, Plaks believes that the title should reflect the content of the *Daxue*, so he includes the word “order”, to reflect the hierarchy of degrees that are outlined and illustrated in the text. Plaks states that his choice of title covers as much semantic ground as possible.

Another example is “大学之道” (Zhu Xi, 1933: 3), translated as “The Way of self-cultivation, at its highest level, is a three-fold path.” (Plaks, 2003: 5) Here, “is a three-fold path” is added by the translator to explain the way / path. This logically reflects the three levels of self-cultivation, namely, “causing the light of one’s inner moral force to shine forth, bringing the people to a state of renewal, and coming to rest in the fullest attainment of the good” (Plaks, 2003: 5). Through these careful choices of words, the difficulty for English readers can be reduced, although of course, such additions increase the length of the translated text.

Finally, after the translated text, Plaks includes some “Reader’s Notes”, which provide a great deal of background information for the *Daxue*. Some citations in the *Daxue* are carefully sourced and annotated. For example, in noting “周虽旧邦,其命惟新”, Plaks first presents its source in *Major Odes* (Ta-ya). He also introduces the main concept of *Major Odes*: “The poem is ostensibly an encomium to the glories of the Chou dynastic founder King Wen by his adoring subjects” (Plaks, 2003: 64). This kind of thick translation not only help readers to learn about Chinese culture and history, but also deepens their understanding of the *Daxue*.

### (3) The Relation norm

The relation norm does not mean word-for-word equivalence. Rather, there should be an appropriate similarity between the source text and the target text. In his “A Note on the Translations” section, Plaks states “On the most general level, I aim to reproduce what may be termed ‘equivalent utterances’, that is, approximations of semantic and syntactic values in context rather than strict matching of lexical units” (Plaks, 2003: xxxvi). This transcends more traditional word-for-word translation, and the semantic and syntactic similarities are prioritized. Plaks pays more attention to the cultural connotations in the text. For this reason, he attempts to translate the multiple meanings of the *Daxue* using thorough and detailed expressions, which are an element of thick translation.

The Penguin Classics version is a reinterpretation of the *Daxue* in the 21st century, and in this version, many culture-loaded words are rendered differently, compared to earlier translations. Plaks goes back to the source context of the *Daxue*, and translates such words within their historical context. His translation is therefore more faithful to the source text. In “Appendix I: Further Discussion of Basic Concepts”, explanation of such culturally-loaded terms as “忠恕” (chung-shu), “君子” (chun-tzu), “性” (hsing), “格物” (ko-wu), and “德” (te) are crucial in helping readers to understand their profound connotations in Chinese culture. By explaining these words and commenting on their translations in detail, Plaks helps the modern reader to understand Chinese culture on a deeper level.

Take, for example, the translation of “德” (de). Plaks translates it as “inner moral force”, as opposed to the more common “virtue”, which former translators used because “virtue” has a Latin root “vir”, which means “power” or “potency”. Plaks tries to translate more of the layers of meaning in the Chinese character. According to Plaks, “de” comes from people’s inner heart, which means, it is innate to human beings. Also, in Confucian

thought, “de” as a kind of moral character is very powerful. “Inner moral force” more accurately embodies the cultural connotation of the term, so it is a better translation for “德”.

Here is another example. This sentence underlines the importance of self-cultivation.

“自天子以至于庶人。壹是皆以修身为本。其本乱而未治者否矣...”。(Zhu Xi, 1933: 4)

Translation: From the Son of Heaven down to the simplest commoner, all are guided by a single principle: that the cultivation of one’s individual character constitutes the core of all attainment. For one to put the peripheral ‘branches’ of one’s behaviour into order, while the ‘roots’ at its core are yet in a state of chaotic entanglement, would be a contradiction in terms... (Plaks, 2003: 6)

To achieve the same communication effect and at the same time be faithful to the source text, the translator adds “all are guided by a single principle:” to make the whole sentence more coherent and easier to understand. While “本” and “末” are faithfully translated as “roots” and “branches” with the quotation mark. It is worth noting that the word “peripheral” is added before “branches” to explain its relatively unimportant position in self-cultivation. This kind of translation enables readers to know the style and the meaning of the source text. More textual evidence can be seen in Plaks’ translation, so it is clear that his translation conforms to the relation norm, which gives priority to the semantic similarity and communication effect.

#### IV. The Dissemination and Reception of the Penguin Classics Edition *Ta Hsüeh*

Penguin Classics have a wide range of readers. Many have already read the Penguin translations of the *Mencius* and Confucius’ *Anelects*, and wanted to finish reading the Four Books. As a result, in 2003, *Ta Hsüeh and Chung Yung (The Highest Order of Cultivation and On the Practice of the Mean)* was published as a single Penguin Classics edition.

In their reviews of the Plaks translation, most English-speaking readers approve of the English translation, and appreciate the detailed background materials, which are helpful for them to understand the text. On Goodreads.com, a large online reading community and English book review website, the *Ta Hsüeh and Chung Yung* scores 3.77 points out of 5, and 87% of readers give it a rating of 3 stars or more (which means satisfaction). On Goodreads, there are 47 ratings and 9 reviews of this book. Some readers say they read it because it has an important position in Chinese culture. For example, a reader named Glenn Berger (2000) commented, “The one book I would take to a desert island. Two of the Four Books that every Chinese scholar revered for 2000 years. These concise texts are packed with infinite wisdom”.<sup>1</sup> Many readers value the *Ta Hsüeh* and *Chung Yung* highly, and in it they find resonances with other cultures, such as the Hebrew *Book of Proverbs*, the Sumerian *Instructions of Shuruppak*, and the Egyptian *Instruction of Ptahhotep*. On Amazon.com, the score of the *Ta Hsüeh and Chung Yung* is 4.4 points out of 5. Some readers think the translation and commentaries are great, and it is easy to read. On 5 June 2014, a reader in the United States commented, “Masterful translations of master works. Great renditions and commentaries of Confucian classics that belong in the libraries of anyone with an interest in Chinese culture and philosophy.”<sup>2</sup> In a word, due to the cultural value of the *Daxue* and Plaks’ sensitive and thick translation, the Penguin Classics version has been well received in the English-speaking literary world.

Plaks’ translation is also well disseminated. The library collections of this book can be found through Worldcat. The Penguin Classics edition is housed by 153 libraries around the world. In addition, an e-book version of the *Ta Hsüeh and Chung Yung*, with 176 pages, was published as early as 25 May 2004 by Penguin Group (USA), the digital edition having already become a useful new medium by which to reach many new readers. In addition, the cover blurb gives a clear and concise introduction to the work: “Their depiction of the ‘Way of Great Learning’ focuses on the moral tenets of Confucian thinking, establishing a universal framework that links individuals with the cosmos. By drawing together key ethical and philosophical, and metaphysical issues, the essays deal with the individual’s development of moral character” (Plaks, 2003). These three factors: the renown

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/341306.Ta\\_Hs\\_eh\\_and\\_Chung\\_Yung?from\\_search=true](https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/341306.Ta_Hs_eh_and_Chung_Yung?from_search=true)

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/341306.Ta\\_Hs\\_eh\\_and\\_Chung\\_Yung?from\\_search=true](https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/341306.Ta_Hs_eh_and_Chung_Yung?from_search=true)

of Penguin Classics as a publishing house, the blurb on the cover, and the publication of the e-book version have contributed greatly to the dissemination of this book among English readers.

## V. Conclusion

According to Chesterman, "Norms function as reasonable expectations, which make it easier to predict the future and hence act rationally" (2016: 53). Chesterman's translation norms can guide practical translation activities, and can also predict the acceptance of translated works. With a new set of target readers, who largely determine the expectancy norms, and compounded with the real-world situation faced by publishers in the 21st century, Plaks conforms to both expectancy norms and professional norms. His translation of the *Daxue* is appropriate for the modern age, and is likely to be accepted by modern readers. As a cross-cultural communicator between Chinese and Western cultures, Plaks has contributed to the dissemination of Chinese culture throughout the world. With its thick translation, his strategy of cross-cultural interpretation, and his abundant background information, Plaks' version of the *Daxue* gives readers a good way to familiarize themselves with the wisdom of the ancient Chinese classics.

One of the main implications of the success of this Penguin Classics edition of *Ta Hsüeh and Chung Yung* is that, when rendering ancient Chinese classics into English, a thick translation is required. Another implication for researchers and others who are interested in Chinese culture is that we should examine Confucianism not only in its historical context, but also interpret it in the context of the modern age. The ancient Chinese classics can and should have a dialogue with modern times. In this way, the wisdom contained in the ancient Chinese classics can be shared worldwide, so as to help the greatest number of people to lead a better life.

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