

Yen Fu's Translation of Huxley's *Evolution and Ethics*

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Yen Fu is "a figure of enormous distinctive impact"¹ at the turn of the twentieth century in China. Because of his profound learning in Western social sciences and his mastery of the classical Chinese literary style, he is admittedly the most knowledgeable scholar and the most competent translator of his time. His first translated work, *T'ien-yen lun*, a translation of T. H. Huxley's *Evolution and Ethics*, published in 1898, was a resounding success. Many of his well-turned phrases used in the translation, such as *wu ching t'ien che* (things struggle, heaven selects) and *yu sheng lieh pai* (the superior win, the inferior lose), have become the bywords of his day. The translation was indeed so well received that Yen was encouraged to turn out seven others in the 1900's.

At the same time Yen also established himself as a translation theorist. Published along with *T'ien-yen lun*, a short discourse on translation entitled "I li-yen" (Sample Remarks on Translation) was written to explain how he translated *T'ien-yen lun*. In these remarks, he set up three criteria for a good translation: fidelity, readability, and elegance. Although these criteria are questioned by some modern scholars,² they are almost universally accepted by later Chinese translators as golden rules.

The importance of Yen Fu has been quite well recognized by both Chinese and American scholars. A chronological biography of Yen Fu, *Yen Chi-tao nien-p'ü*, compiled by one of his admirers, Wang Ch'ü-ch'ang in 1935 and published in the following year, is a very useful reference. Chou Chen-fu's *Yen Fu ssu-hsiang shu-p'ing* (A Critical Interpretation of Yen Fu's Thought) is a sympathetic but rather diffused account of Yen's thought, with copious quotations from his translations and commentaries. Wang Shih's *Yen Fu chuan* (Biography of Yen Fu) is, in contrast with Chou's work, a study of Yen's life from the Marxist-Leninist point of view,

in which the author condemns Yen Fu as a reactionary after the turn of the century. Benjamin Schwartz's *In Search of Wealth and Power: Yen Fu and the West*, as the subtitle has shown us, is a comparative study of Yen Fu's responses to the eighteenth and nineteenth century European thinkers, chiefly those of England. Yen Fu's influence on the political thought of Dr. Sun Yat-sen is discussed by Y. C. Wang in his essay, "The Influence of Yen Fu and Liang Ch'i-ch'ao on the *San Min Chu I*."

Schwartz's *In Search of Wealth and Power* is by far the most comprehensive and impartial study among the above-mentioned works. The greater part of that book is devoted to a discussion on Yen Fu's major translations. Schwartz has, on the one hand, given Yen Fu full credit as a great translator and a stylist. He maintains that Yen Fu's translations on the whole do communicate the essence of the author's thought which Yen Fu is trying to communicate in his translation.³ On the other hand, he points out with clarity that Yen Fu sometimes does distort the ideas of his translated authors by his preoccupations with wealth and power.⁴

But with regard to how Yen Fu translates the thought of his 'Western sages' into Chinese Schwartz has little to say. As Yen's translations are more noted for excellence of style and facility of expression in Chinese than for fidelity to the English texts, I consider it of great interest to attempt to explore some of the techniques which Yen uses in introducing modern Western ideas to his Chinese readers. Being unable to discuss all his translations adequately in a paper of this scope, I will confine myself to a fairly thorough treatment of his translation of *Evolution and Ethics*.

Eighty-five years have elapsed since Yen published his *T'ien-yen lun* in 1898. It is time now for us to make an objective evaluation of that famous translation. In order to be objective, first of all, we have to know what his difficulties in translating it were and how he overcame them. Second, we have to answer the question—What are Yen's merits as a translator—with concrete examples. And third, we will comb out, as thoroughly as possible, all the errors that Yen has committed in translating it. To accomplish the above goals, we have to make a close comparison of the translation with the original.

But to make the comparison in two entirely different languages is ineffective as well as infeasible. This is why I have taken some pains to translate a part of Yen's translation back into English. To retain a slight flavour of Yen's prose style, I have spared no efforts in making my retransla-

tion as literal as possible. If in attempting to be literal I have made some of my sentences sound Chinglish, I would beg the forbearance of my readers.

Before embarking on my main task, I will note in passing a few questionable statements made by some Yen scholars. One of them is about the date of Yen's translation.

As we know, Huxley's *Evolution and Ethics* was a Romanes lecture delivered before the University of Oxford in 1893, two years before his death. Because it was a lecture of a popular character, at the demand of his critics, Huxley wrote the *Prolegomena* to elucidate a number of propositions in 1894.⁵ Courtney implies that both the essay and the *Prolegomena* were published in 1895:

On this note the Oxford lecture ended. In the *Prolegomena*, published with it in the last year of Huxley's life⁶

It is to be admitted that this is useful but not decisive information, because the essay and the *Prolegomena* might appear separately in pamphlets or other forms. It is, however, not unsafe for us to assume that they could not appear together before the end of 1894. This piece of information is strongly against Wang Shih's supposition that there is a great probability that Yen has begun his translation in 1894,⁷ which is unfortunately followed by both Schwartz and Y. C. Wang.⁸ I do not deny that there is some possibility, but that possibility is too slim indeed.

Yen himself tells us clearly at the end of his preface that he spent the summer of 1896 in translating the book and wrote the preface on the Double Ninth Festival of that year.⁹ If we do not believe Yen's own words, who else shall be our authority?

Another questionable statement is about Huxley's original work. As I have mentioned before, the *Prolegomena* was written to elucidate the lecture, *Evolution and Ethics*. When Huxley had finished it, he discovered that it was longer than the lecture. Consequently he was obliged to apologize:

and if it be urged that the new building looks over large for the edifice to which it is added, I can only plead the precedent of the ancient architects, who always made the adytum the smallest part of the temple.¹⁰

In the 1929's edition of *Evolution and Ethics and Other Essays*, the prolegomena is 45-page long, the essay, 40 pages. In Yen's translation, the prolegomena forms volume I (shang chüan) of *T'ien-yen lun*, and the essay, volume II (hsia chüan). Volume I has 48 pages, whereas volume II has 51 pages. The situation is seemingly reversed. This is because Yen's commentaries in volume II are generally longer than those in volume I.

It is curious to notice that Y. C. Wang, after citing Wang Shih's date, 1894, for the year in which Yen commenced his translation, writes:

It [the translation] includes only the first two chapters of the original work.¹¹

This statement is erroneous. It implies that *T'ien-yen lun* is a part of a much larger work. As a matter of fact, the other essays of the anthology such as "Capital--the Mother of Labour" and "Social Diseases and Worse Remedies" have nothing to do with the topic of evolution and ethics. It is misleading to say that the essay in question and its *Prolegomena* are "only the first two chapters of the original work."

A third questionable statement is about Yen's motive in translating the work. Yen's motive in doing the translation is succinctly stated at the end of his own preface:

The purpose of this book of Huxley's is to correct the abuses of Spencer's *laissez-faire*. Many of its arguments are in accord with what our ancient sages have said. Furthermore, matters such as self-strengthening and the preservation of the race are reiterated in it. That is why I spent the long, weary days of the past summer to translate it. If there were people who regarded it as empty talk and useless to practical affairs, they would certainly be beyond my care.

Schwartz is correct in pointing out that Yen has been impelled to translate the book mainly by the fact that Huxley deliberates on matters which are relevant to "self-strengthening and the preservation of the race." And it is also this fact which arouses the enormous excitement of the young men who read it.¹² The enormous sensation created and the great influence exerted by the translation indicate that Huxley's work has fully fulfilled Yen's objective.

It is true that Yen's commentaries "abound in panegyrics of Spencer and defences of his position on various matters."¹³ But Huxley's affirmation

that the state of nature develops from relative uniformity to relative complexity, that the struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest become the two characteristics of the living world is Yen's primary concern. His bringing in of the views of Spencer, of Smith, and of a number of others is to broaden his readers' view by looking at a given question from different angles. He does not panegyryze Spencer alone. He also sings the praise of Smith, Copernicus, Malthus, Bacon, Descartes, and many others. To say that "*T'ien-yen lun* consists of two works—a paraphrase of Huxley's lecture[s], and an exposition of Spencer's essential views as against Huxley"¹⁴ is, to a certain extent, to over emphasize the importance of Spencer to Yen. Of his commentaries Yen has the following explanation:

The investigation of science is similar to the administration of public affairs in that the accumulation and comparison of ideas are invaluable. Whenever I find in other books similarities to and differences from this book, I will put them into my commentaries for your reference. Occasionally I also express some of my own opinions, with the hope of emulating what *The Book of Songs* calls 'ying chiu'¹⁵ and *The Book of Changes* calls 'li che' (mutual assistance of friends). Whether they are right or wrong I will let my judicious readers decide. I am by no means dogmatic. If some should be so mistaken as to say that I was trying to bolster myself, I would consider my labour in translating this book lost.¹⁶

So much for the questionable statements made by some Yen scholars. We are now ready to deal with Yen's difficulties in making the translation. What are his difficulties? To my mind, there are at least two. One is the choice of the medium. The other is the problem of format.

The medium which Yen decides to use in his translation is classical Chinese (ku wen), and a pre-Ch'in one at that. His style, as Schwartz puts it, is "a happy combination of precision and richness, terseness and profundity, clarity and elegance."¹⁷ The reasons why Yen chooses classical Chinese as his medium given by Schwartz are summarized as follows: (1) Classical Chinese is an appropriate medium to interest the literati of his time, (2) A dignified style can prove that Westerners are not inferior to Chinese in matter of literature and political science, (3) Yen's flair for elegance may reflect his own aesthetic bent and his pride in his own virtuosity, and (4) The whole pai-hua (vernacular) movement still lay in the future. It was to take place in 1919, 25 years later.¹⁸

But according to Yen himself, his choice is made on the basis that "where language has no refinement, the effect will not extend far" and that the classical Chinese has a richer vocabulary than that of the vernacular. There are more terms applicable to the new Western ideas.¹⁹ This attitude of Yen's is understandable if the English-speaking readers will look back to their Renaissance period. A. C. Baugh points out that in the Renaissance, when English had attained an established position as the language of popular literature, there was still a strong tradition that sanctioned the use of Latin in all the fields of knowledge:

Beside the classical languages, which seemingly had attained perfection, the vulgar tongues seemed immature, unpolished, and limited in resource. It was felt that they could not express the abstract ideas and the range of thought embodied in the ancient languages.²⁰

Here our attention must be called upon to the fact that in Yen's time only such popular literature as dramas, ballads, and novels were written in the vernacular. But they were looked down upon by the literati, the two highest genres being poetry and prose.

When we compare *T'ien-yen lun* with the original work, we find the most conspicuous difference is in format. Huxley's *Prolegomena* is written in fifteen sections, with no title but a Roman numeral at the beginning of each section. Yen divides the first section of the *Prolegomena* into three p'ien (chapters), the tenth into two, and therefore there are altogether eighteen chapters in Yen's volume I. He then gives each chapter a well-turned phrase as its title.²¹ Huxley's long lecture on evolution and ethics is written in a single unit, unobtrusively divided into eight sections by double spacing. Yen divides it into seventeen chapters with the result that each chapter is about of the same length as those in volume I. These seventeen chapters form volume II and each of them is also given a properly worded title. In doing so, Yen makes the structure of his translated work similar to that of the *tsu* genre with which the Chinese literati are familiar. This divergence from the original work is necessitated not only by his desire to make his readers at home, but also by the fact that in Yen's time the practice of paragraphing was not popularly adopted. If Yen had followed Huxley's format, we would have had a fifty-page essay printed in one unit, which, to my mind, would prove too trying even to the most patient reader.

In addition, this division also enables him to make comments con-

veniently at the end of each chapter. The contents of his commentaries are of a great variety. Sometimes they are a recapitulation of a chapter. For example, at the end of chapter 14, volume I, Yen remarks:

What Huxley intends to point out in this chapter is that in order to preserve the society as well as the individual, self-assertion should not be completely abolished.

(Yen, I, 34)

At times, they are supplemental information to elucidate a certain difficult passage or a certain term. But most often, they are an evaluation of Huxley's idea. For instance, in chapter 13, volume I, Yen writes:

Huxley's discussion on the preservation of the society is indeed penetrating. But we should know that his statement that sympathy is the origin of human society has reversed the result to be the cause. Man's motive in forming a society is primarily for his self-interest, which is similar to those of lower animals Therefore, Huxley's discussion on sociology is not as thorough as that of Spencer. Furthermore, the theory that sympathy is the origin of human society was first advocated by Adam Smith, the economist. It is not a new theory contributed by Huxley.

(Yen, I, 32-33)

Some of the commentaries are longer than the translated text. But roughly speaking, they make up about a quarter of the book.

On the other hand, the division of the essay into chapters also presents a problem to Yen. Usually he makes three or four successive paragraphs into a chapter. Since they are only a portion of the whole essay and more often than not are connected with what precedes or follows them, they can hardly stand alone as an organic whole. Yen has fully realized this problem and has been often forced to add a few sentences of his own at the beginning or the end of each chapter to give it a sense of finish.

The following tables will show the difference of formats at a glance. The English translation of the chapter headings are mine. To avoid the confusion that may be created by the abundant Chinese homonyms, the original Chinese characters are put in parentheses. These tables can be useful to those who want to make a comparison of a particular passage between the translation and the original.

Table 1

T. H. Huxley	Yen Fu
<i>Prolegomena</i>	<i>Introductions to Essays on Evolution, Vol. I</i>
[Section]	Chapter
I Parr. 1-5	1. The Observation of Changes (察變)
6-9	2. An Exposition of Evolution (廣義)
10-11	3. The Tendency towards Variation (趨異)
II	4. The Intervention of Man (人爲)
III	5. The Antagonism between Art and Nature (互爭)
IV	6. Human Selection (人擇)
V	7. The Vanquished Colony (善敗)
VI	8. Utopia (烏托邦)
VII	9. The Elimination of the Superfluous (汰蕃)
VIII	10. The Difficulty of Selection (擇難)
IX	11. Bee Society (蜂群)
X Parr. 1-3	12. Human Society (人群)
4-6	13. The Check upon Self-Assertion (制私)
XI	14. The Defeat of Self-Restraint (恕敗)
XII	15. A Summary of the Preceding Chapters (最旨)
XIII	16. The Progressive Modification of Civilization (進微)
XIV	17. The Good of Society (善群)
XV	18. The Resumption of the Cosmic Process (新反)

Table 2

T. H. Huxley	Yen Fu
<i>Evolution and Ethics</i>	<i>Essays on Evolution</i> , Vol. II
A quot. from Seneca is used as a motto	The quotation is omitted
[Section]	Chapter
[1]	1. Potentiality and Manifestations (能實)
[2]	2. Suffering (憂患)
[3] and the first three parr. of [4]	3. The Origin of Religions (教源)
[4] Parr. 4-6	4. Punishment and Reward according to Motive (嚴意)
[5] Parr. 1-4	5. The Ways of the Cosmos (天刑)
5-6	6. Cosmodicy: the Doctrine of Transmigration (佛釋)
7-8	7. Karma (種業)
9-12	8. The Mortification of the Flesh (冥往)
13-14	9. Reality and Illusion (真幻)
15-19	10. Buddhism (佛法)
[6] Parr. 1-3	11. Philosophical Schools (學派)
4-6	12. The Vulnerability of Cosmodicy (天難)
7-9	13. On Nature (論性)
[7]	14. The Renunciation of Nature (矯性)
[8] Parr. 1-5	15. The Evolution of Evil (演惡)
6-8	16. The Administration of Society (群治)
9-15	17. Evolution (進化)

I have shown in the preceding paragraphs the two major difficulties that Yen encounters in translating *Evolution and Ethics* and how he solves them. As a preparation for our more specific analysis of Yen's merits as a translator, we will take a look at a rather long passage of his to gain a general feel of his translation. Then we will also choose a few short ones to demonstrate the difference of prose style between the writer and the translator.

To give my readers a general notion of Yen's translation, I will use a deliberately chosen example. The original is in the fifth section of the lecture:

Greek and Semite and Indian are agreed upon this subject. The book of Job is one with the 'Works and Days' and the Buddhist Sutras; the Psalmist and the Preacher of Israel, with the Tragic Poets of Greece. What is a more common motive of the ancient tragedy in fact, than the unfathomable injustice of the nature of things; what is more deeply felt to be true than its presentation of the destruction of the blameless by the work of his own hands, or by the fatal operation of the sins of others? Surely Oedipus was pure of heart; it was the natural sequence of events—the cosmic process—which drove him, in all innocence, to slay his father and become the husband of his mother, to the desolation of his people and his own headlong ruin. Or to step, for a moment, beyond the chronological limits I have set myself, what constitutes the sempiternal attraction of Hamlet but the appeal to deepest experience of that history of a no less blameless dreamer, dragged, in spite of himself, into a world out of joint; involved in a tangle of crime and misery, created by one of the prime agents of the cosmic process as it works in and through man?

Thus, brought before the tribunal of ethics, the cosmos might well seem to stand condemned. The conscience of man revolted against the moral indifference of nature, and the microcosmic atom should have found the illimitable macrocosm guilty. But few, or none, ventured to record that verdict.

Yen's translation is to be found in Chapter 5, "The Way of the Cosmos," Vol. II:

Alas, the disorder of Heaven is fully known to the people of India, Greece, and Palestine. Gautama's *Sutras*, the *Book of Job of the Old Testament*, and the *Laments* of Homer are all much alike in voicing the injustice of Heaven. When flood inundates, lava flows from volcano, famine and plague break out, the total number of people killed will put the slaughter

by Chieh and Chou²² to shame. Can all these people be evil and deserve the disasters fallen upon them? When a man becomes a king or an emperor, he will more often than not assert that it is the decree of Heaven. Jenghiz Khan was ruthless and inhuman, killing people like weeds. Yet the territory of his empire spanned over two continents. Oedipus was a righteous man, but he was driven to kill his father with his own hands and take his mother to wife. Hamlet was a filial son. Yet in order to avenge his father, he had to kill his stepfather, to insult his own mother, and to stab his own chest with a dagger. They all experienced the most severe pain and grief of life without being guilty. But who superintends? Such being the case, how can it be maintained that, though invisible, high up there, there reigns one, whose likes and dislikes are similar to ours, and who has power to reward good and punish evil? Once a zoologist caught a deer. He dissected and studied it, and found its tendon sinewy, its body nimble, its sense of smell sensitive, and its legs long. Said he with a sigh, "Great is the creator to endow it with alertness to danger and swiftness of foot so that it can keep itself out of harm's way for its own protection!" Another day he caught a wolf. He also dissected and studied it, and found its muzzle deep, its lungs huge, its neck strong, and its legs tireless. He also observed with a sigh, "Great is the creator to endow it with ferocity and strength so that it can get food to sustain itself!" From a scientific point of view, both the deer and the wolf reveal the consummate artistry of the creator, and no verdict is pronounced upon either of them. When man's opinion prevails, the harm that the wolf has done and the harm from which the deer has suffered become distinct. Once the deer is said to be good and tame, the wolf evil and cruel, all that facilitates the welfare of the deer is a good deed, all that helps the wolf is an evil deed. But both of them are the handiworks of the creator. Let me put it in another way. Suppose there is a man who can kill another man with his right hand and raise him from the dead with his left. Is that man benevolent or cruel, good or evil? To my mind, he is neither benevolent nor cruel, neither good nor evil. He is above the dichotomy. If we unwittingly use the dichotomy to judge him, we are wide off the mark. Therefore if we accept the ancient theory that ethics derive from Heaven and bring Heaven before the tribunal of ethics, Heaven will be found principal in the first degree, and be unable to defend his wrong-doings to the created things. How can Heaven wield the power of punishment and reward and brazenly say he will dispense a hundred blessings to the good-doer and a hundred misfortunes to the wrong-doer?

A careful comparison of my retranslation with Huxley's original can be very illuminating. In doing this, we may not place Yen in an entirely favorable light. First, we notice that Western literature is not his forte. We

know it was Hesiod, not Homer, who wrote *Works and Days*, in which Hesiod lamented his misfortunes, because his brother defrauded him of his inheritance. The epics of Homer, as Huxley points out in a later section of the same lecture, "set before us a world of rich and vigorous life, full of joyous fighting men." It is no exaggeration to say that Homer differs from Hesiod as cheese from chalk. Despite the contrasting qualities of the two poets, Yen takes Homer for the author of *Works and Days*. We also know that it is from the Greek legend that Sophocles draws his inspiration for the creation of the memorable character Oedipus. But Yen mentions in his marginal note that the deeds of Oedipus can be found in the ancient Greek history, implying that Oedipus is a historical figure. Furthermore, the story of Hamlet as we know it from Shakespeare differs from Yen's simplified translation in one important aspect. Hamlet does not take his own life with a dagger, but dies in a fencing bout with poisoned foils and poisoned drink.

In the second place, we also notice that the translation is much longer than the original, even though a part of the original, for example, the coordinate clause of the second sentence, "the Psalmist and the Preacher of Israel, with the Tragic Poets of Greece," is not translated. This is because Yen's version, strictly speaking, is not a translation, but an expansion or exposition of the original. In the original text, Huxley cites two examples, Oedipus and Hamlet, to show "the unfathomable injustice of the nature of things." In Yen's version, we find four. The first two are Yen's contribution. One of them is the natural disasters which indiscriminately wipe out a large number of people. The other is Jenghiz Khan, who, despite being ruthless, is a successful conqueror. The Khan, of course, is a good example that "the wicked flourishes like a green bay tree," a statement that Huxley makes in the preceding paragraph of his lecture. But Yen's use of Jenghiz Khan may also have a stylistic reason, for the Khan provides a sharp contrast to Oedipus and Hamlet.

To explain the idea that nature is amoral, or morally indifferent, Yen makes up two examples, which are non-existent in the original. In the first example, through the study of a zoologist, Yen shows that both the deer and the wolf are the products of the cosmic process, and urges us not to have a biased human point of view on the wolf. From our vantage ground gained through ecology, we find Yen's example not only appropriate but far-sighted. The wolf is indeed needed for the maintenance of ecological balance.²³

In the second example, Yen uses a hypothetical man, who can kill

another man with his right hand and raise him from the dead with his left. Then Yen points out that this man is neither benevolent nor cruel, neither good nor evil, for he is above the dichotomy. It is true that all the above examples are made up by Yen and extraneous to Huxley's text. But it is also true that they are germane to the ideas discussed. Indeed the additional examples given by Yen are so relevant to the points and so appropriate in their respective places that but for our close examination, few readers, if there were any, would ever suspect that they did not belong to the original.

Furthermore, we may also notice a curious fact. While the original has two paragraphs, the translation, though much augmented in length, is in a single paragraph. This is because, as I have mentioned before, the Western practice of paragraphing is not popularly adopted at Yen's time, and Yen clings to the traditional way of writing an essay in a single unit. So, one chapter is written and printed in just one paragraph, to borrow a convenient word. Our deliberately chosen passage, though almost too long for an average modern reader to read, constitutes only about two thirds of the chapter. Had Yen not broken the lecture up into seventeen chapters, the whole translated lecture would also have been printed in one paragraph. The length of that paragraph could well be twenty-four times of our passage. Few readers, I believe, could finish a paragraph of this length without succumbing to Morpheus. We can easily see this is a powerful argument for Yen's change of format, for his dividing up both the lecture and the prolegomena into many chapters.

Although both Huxley and Yen are great stylists, their styles are different. Huxley, in Courtney's words,

wrote a style of crystal clearness, the fitting expression of his clearness of thought. And he was stern with himself about any exuberance—"it is an excellent rule always to erase anything that strikes one as particularly smart when writing it."²⁴

Whereas Yen, it seems to me, is unable to refuse using the over-flowing abundance of his expressions. He is sometimes more poetic than scientific. If we compare the following short passages carefully, we will perhaps find that Huxley excels in terseness, and Yen in elegance:

Turn back a square foot of the thin turf, and the solid foundation of the land, exposed in cliffs of chalk five hundred feet high on the adjacent shore, yields full assurance of a time when the sea covered the site of the 'everlasting hills.'

(Huxley, 3)

If you are surprised by what I say, evidence is not too far to seek. Dig into the ground where you are standing a few feet deep and you will find cliffs of chalk. Because of the chalk, we know this place must be a great sea in ancient times, for chalk is formed by the accumulation of sea-shells If this had not been a great sea, whence came these sea-shells which are as numerous as the sands of the Ganges? The old saying that dust will rise from the sea is therefore not an extravagant one.

(Yen, I, 2)

No less certain is it that, between the time during which the chalk was formed and that at which the original turf came into existence, thousands of centuries elapsed, in the course of which, the state of nature of the ages during which the chalk was deposited, passed into that which now is, by changes so slow that, in the coming and going of the generations of men, had such witnessed them, the contemporary conditions would have seemed to be unchanging and unchangeable.

(Huxley, 3)

The geologists examine various kinds of fossils and know that all plants and animals have undergone changes. But the changes are so subtle, the process is so gradual, that even if we could live as long as P'eng Chu or Lao Tan,²⁵ we are watching eternity on the bank of brevity. If we do not notice any changes, we are similar to the crickets of autumn that know nothing of spring, the fungi that grow and die within a single day and know nothing about the wax and wane of the moon.²⁶ In case we imprudently maintain that there is no change, we are indeed blind.

(Yen, I, 2)

Now that we have studied a fairly long passage of Yen's translation and also tasted a couple of prose samples of Huxley and Yen, we may have a mixed impression of Yen as a translator. This is good because if we want to be objective in our criticism, we have to know his weaknesses as well as his strong points. We are now ready to deal with Yen's merits as a translator.

Yen is doubtless a versatile translator. He seems to have some special ways of translation at his disposal. For various reasons, these special ways are seldom employed by modern translators. Because they serve Yen well

at his time and make *T'ien-yen lun* a great success, I will consider them his merits. For want of available terms to describe them, I am obliged to christen them with my own coinages. One of his recommendable ways of rendering can be called translation by substitution. The example in the following paragraphs will illustrate the use of translation by substitution.

T. H. Huxley begins the Romanes lecture with much leisure and finesse. He mentions that there is a delightful nursery tale by the title of "Jack and the Bean Stalk," with which his contemporaries are familiar. But because of changing circumstances, many of his young audience may not know the story. So he proceeds to give an outline of it and then ask them to accompany him, the sexagenarian Jack, to explore a strange new world by the help of a bean. For the convenience of comparison, the introductory portion is quoted in full:

Soleo enim et in aliena castra transire, non tanquam transfuga sed tanquam explorator.²⁷

(L. Annaei Senecae Epist. II, 4.)

There is a delightful child's story, known by the title of 'Jack and the Bean Stalk', with which my contemporaries who are present will be familiar. But so many of our grave and reverend juniors have been brought up on severer intellectual diet, and, perhaps, have become acquainted with fairyland only through primers of comparative mythology, that it may be needful to give an outline of the tale. It is a legend of a bean-plant, which grows and grows until it reaches the high heavens and there spreads out into a vast canopy of foliage. The hero, being moved to climb the stalk, discovers that the leafy expanse supports a world composed of the same elements as that below, but yet strangely new; and his adventures there, on which I may not dwell, must have completely changed his views of the nature of things; though the story, not having been composed by, or for, philosophers, has nothing to say about views.

My present enterprise has a certain analogy to that of the daring adventurer. I beg you to accompany me in an attempt to reach a world which, to many, is probably strange, by the help of a bean. It is, as you know a simple, inert-looking thing.

We can notice that the Latin motto is apt and elegant, that the introduction well written, the analogy compellingly appropriate, but the substance slight. What is admirable is its scholarly suave style, not its meat. But it presents a formidable difficulty to Yen. For one thing, to tell that tale

adequately takes time and space. For another, even if the tale is well told in Chinese, the "grave and reverend" literati may not enjoy it. A child's story is almost a taboo to the high-minded literati. How can such a kid's stuff be admitted to the hall of the refined? What would you do if you were Yen? Yen's way out is to drop it altogether and write a passage of his own. Yen's version runs as follows:

The Way (tao) can be found by descending to the most insignificant thing. To thoroughly examine the nature of that most insignificant thing is to have examined the nature of all things. To exhaust the truth in it is to have exhausted the truth in all things. What matters is a masterly application of our knowledge, not the profundity or the magnitude of the subject of our investigation.

Is this translation? One may legitimately ask. My answer is yes. This is translation in spirit, not in letter. It is at least one of Yen's ways of translation.

The first sentence of Yen's passage is an allusion to a parable in the twenty-second chapter, "Knowledge Wandered North," of *Chuang Tzu*. Chuang Tzu is asked where the Way exists. He replies, saying that it exists everywhere. When pressed for a more specific answer, Chuang Tzu first says that it is in the ant, next in the panic grass, then in the tiles and shards, and finally in the piss and shit. The inquirer is shocked into silence. To illuminate his point, Chuang Tzu says, "Sir, your questions simply don't get at the substance of the matter. When Inspector Huo asked the superintendent of the market how to test the fatness of a pig by pressing it with the foot, he was told that the lower down on the pig you press, the nearer you come to the truth."²⁸ It is regrettable that the scholarly suave style of Yen's classical Chinese may have suffered a great deal in my English translation. But hopefully I have managed to retain some of the paradoxical flavour of the passage. We can easily see that the parable of *Chuang Tzu* and the story of "Jack and the Bean Stalk" have at least one point in common. The point is, to use a familiar line of Blake's, that one can "see the world through a grain of sand." I have tentatively named this method 'translation by substitution.' But you may also call it 'translation in spirit' if you wish.

A cousin of the 'translation by substitution' method can be christened 'translation by parallelism.' It is one of Yen's favorite methods. Where Huxley uses an allusion, Yen, whenever possible, supplies his readers with

its equivalent from the Chinese classics. For example:

... the notion that human society is competent to furnish, from its own sources, an administrator of the kind I have imagined. The pigeons, in short, are to be their own Sir John Sebright.

(Huxley, 22)

Now if a man is to select men, does he differ from the sheep of Shang-lin who want to be their own Pu Shih, or the horses of P'ing-wei who desire to be their own Po I?²⁹ This only shows that he has shamelessly over-rated himself.

(Yen, I, 26)

For another example, in order to show how difficult it is for a man to be indifferent to public opinion, Huxley alludes to the *Old Testament*:

And, though one cannot justify Haman for wishing to hang Mordecai on such a very high gibbet, yet, really, the consciousness of the Vizier of Ahasuerus, as he went in and out of the gate, that this obscure Jew had no respect for him, must have been very annoying.³⁰

(Huxley, 28)

Yen finds a parallel in *The History of the Former Han* and alludes to it as follows:

General Li Kwang's insistence on killing the constable of Pa Ling is indeed not justifiable. Yet, it is only human that this Flying-tiger General, whose name the Tartars shuddered to hear, and whose pension was two thousand piculs of rice, would be highly annoyed to be stopped by the petty constable, when he was returning late from hunting.

(Yen, I, 31-32)

A third example is also enlightening:

Fragile reed as he may be, man, as Pascal says, is a thinking reed: there lies within him a fund of energy, operating intelligently and so far akin to that which pervades the universe, that it is competent to influence and modify the cosmic process. In virtue of his intelligence, the dwarf bends the Titan to his will.

(Huxley, 83-84)

Does not the French scholar Pascal say that, though he is a delicate reed, man is able to communicate with the devine? To be able to communicate with the devine is nothing but to be able to think. Within such a tiny blade of reed there lies boundless magical energy. The form of this energy is akin to the soundless and odorless substance which pervades the universe. Therefore it is capable of influencing and modifying the cosmic process, just as Buddha says: one who lives within a grain of mustard seed turns the great wheel of fortune.

(Yen, II, 49)

Please note the remarkable last sentence in Yen's version. Realizing that his readers are not familiar with Titan, a Greek mythological figure, Yen uses a well-known Hindu parallel to replace it. And the wonder is that the meaning of "the dwarf bends the Titan to his will" is fully conveyed by the Chinese text.

The next method of Yen's translation can be properly named 'translation by vivification.' Yen often vivifies Huxley's ideas by changing his generalizations into concrete images or specific examples. For a couple of instances:

... the development of a tree from its seed, or of a fowl from its egg. . . .

(Huxley, 6)

A giant tree which when uprooted will shake the earth grows out of a small seed. The p'eng bird whose wings becloud the sky comes from a tiny egg.³¹

(Yen, I, 5)

The thief and the murderer follow nature as much as the philanthropist.

(Huxley, 80)

What a great difference lies between the tyrant Chieh of Hsia and the virtuous king Yao, between the notorious man-slaughterer brigand Chih and the benevolent scholar Po I! Yet, despite their contrasting virtue and vice, they all follow nature in their own manner.

(Yen, II, 43)

Finally, Yen often takes pains to transmit an unfamiliar term with phrases or sentences which are elegant and familiar to his Chinese readers. This method must be termed 'translation by wit,' for there is nothing from which Yen can draw but his own resourcefulness. A few fine examples can

be found in the following two passages:

The little Amarella Gentians, which abound in some places to-day, are the descendants of those that were trodden underfoot by the prehistoric savages who have left their flint tools about, here and there; and they followed ancestors which, in the climate of the glacial epoch, probably flourished better than they do now. Compared with the long past of this humble plant, all the history of civilized men is but an episode.

(Huxley, 2)

In the south of England, the gentians are abundant. Since the time before the historical records, they had been plucked and trodden by the leather-clad, stone-ax-wielding people. What we see now are their descendants. Before the most ancient times, when the axis of the earth had not yet started revolving, the British islands were a district of ice sky and snow seas. As the gentians were capable of enduring cold, they probably flourished better than they do now. This is only a humble plant. Yet when we trace its ancestry, we can go back so far even to the chaotic period of the world. Thus, man's history from time immemorial compared to it, like the water of rapids compared to that of the Great River, is not unlike a tiny tributary.

(Yen, I, 1-2)

We can immediately see that "the leather-clad, stone-ax-wielding people" are "the prehistoric savages," and that "when the axis of the earth had not yet started revolving" and "a district of ice sky and snow seas" are meant to convey the meaning of "the climate of the glacial epoch." But I think Yen's genius is displayed to its best in rendering the word "episode," a Greek theatrical term, into "the water of rapids compared to that of the Great River" or "a tiny tributary of the Yangtse." However, only those who realize the unfamiliarity of the word "episode" to Yen's contemporaries and the difficulty of translating it literally into Chinese can fully appreciate the facility of Yen's rendering.

These are some of the special ways of translation used by Yen effectively. They should definitely not be construed as an exhaustive list of his merits. Rather they represent some of his more prominent good points. A moment ago I have demonstrated, with the long concluding passage of Chapter 5, Vol. II, that Yen is not a perfect translator. He does make errors. But is there a translator who has never made errors? It is true to say to err is human. And it can be equally true to say to translate is to err. If we are not forgiving, we can handily use "the *Lâ-*

ments of Homer” and “Hamlet takes his own life with a dagger” as laughing stocks to ridicule Yen. All translators, however, within my limited knowledge, make errors; but only the errors made by a good translator are discovered and pointed out.

By the strict standard of modern scholarship, we can find quite a few serious shortcomings in Yen’s translation. But of course we should measure Yen with the yardstick of his time, not with that of ours. Nevertheless it can be instructive to point them out so that aspiring translators may avoid them in the future.

First, Yen does not translate Huxley’s notes on the lecture and makes no acknowledgement of their existence. We all know that Yen provides copious commentaries on *T’ien-yen lun* for the edification of his readers. But few of us know that there are footnotes on the *Prolegomena* and twenty-four lengthy notes, two of them run over three pages, on the lecture written by the author himself. This is because Yen neither translates the notes nor acknowledges their existence. But to translate these notes, a good command of English and Chinese alone is not sufficient. The translator has to be proficient in Latin, Greek, and French at the same time, for there are many quotations from the classical masters. We can hardly blame Yen for his not translating them, but we regret his failure to make due acknowledgement.

Second, Yen is inconsistent in some of his transliterations. Not unlike Henry James, a great stylist and contemporary of Yen’s, Yen is very fond of stylish variation. For example, India is usually referred to as Yin-tu 印度, once as Yüan-tu or Chüan-tu 身毒, a couple of times as T’ien-chu 天竺, and several times as Chu-ch’ien 竺乾.³² This is quite acceptable, for the ancient names of India, Yüan-tu, T’ien-chu, and Chu-ch’ien are familiar to the Chinese literati. To refer to Greece, however, as Eh-li-ssu 額里思,³³ instead of sticking to the commonly accepted name Hsi-la 希臘, is open to question. But the pandemonium breaks out when his bent for variation is combined with inconsistency of transliteration.

When discussing Plato, Yen once in a while uses Plato’s original name Aristocles, whose Chinese transliteration is Ya-li-ta-ko. The trouble is Ya-li-ta-ko has three Chinese versions: 亞利大各, 亞里大各, and 雅里大各.³⁴ Aristocles is easily confused with Aristotle, whose Chinese transliterations are Ya-li-ssu-ta-te 亞里斯大德 and Ya-li-ta-te-le 雅里大德勒.³⁵ Yen is fully aware of the possibility that his readers might get confused. In the

commentaries on Chapter 11, Vol. II, Yen explains that Aristotle is often confused with Aristocles, which is the name of Aristotle's master. Then he goes on to say, "Who is Aristotle? He is an eminent disciple of Plato's." It is obvious that Yen has never made any attempt for uniformity.

If the reader is supposed to know that Ya-li-ta-ko is one person and Ya-li-ta-te-le another, how is he to construe the sage of A-po-chih-la 阿伯智拉 and the sage of Ya-po-ti-la 亞伯地拉? ³⁶ Are they two sages or one sage? And again how is he to make of O-mo 鄂謨 and O-mo-erh 鄂謨爾? ³⁷ Two poets or one poet? Inconsistency of transliteration can be very confusing and frustrating, especially when these strange names sound so unfamiliar to a Chinese ear.

Third, there are interpolations. At the end of Chapter 1, Vol. I, for example, we find:

Spencer says: Natural selection means the survival of the fittest. As things struggle for existence and nature selects those who have survived in the competition, changes are bound to evolve.

But all these words are not in Huxley's text. Yen should reserve them for his commentaries. In this instance Yen misrepresents Huxley by saying what he has not said. In the next instance Yen does Huxley injustice by omitting what he has said.

The second instance of Yen's interpolation can be discovered by comparing the following two passages:

We judge the acts of others by our own sympathies, and we judge our own acts by the sympathies of others, every day and all day long, from childhood upwards, until associations, as indissoluble as those of language, are formed between certain acts and the feelings of approbation or disapprobation. It becomes impossible to imagine some acts without disapprobation, or others without approbation of the actor, whether he be one's self, or any one else. We come to think in the acquired dialect of morals. An artificial personality, the 'man within', as Adam Smith ³⁸ calls conscience, is built up beside the natural personality. He is the watchman of society, charged to restrain the anti-social tendencies of the natural man within the limits required by social welfare.

(Huxley, 29)

We judge the acts of others by our own approval or disapproval. We judge our own acts by the censure or praise of others. Every word or act of ours and that of others is inseparable from approval or disapproval, censure or praise. After a long practice, it is impossible to imagine some act without approval or disapproval, censure or praise. This begets the sense of right and wrong, and also the sense of shame. The constant virtue of the heart derives from our fellow-feeling. Therefore, there is something in the heart which is in control of the heart. We call it conscience. Conscience is the protector of society, charged to check upon self-assertion, so that no excessive free play of self-assertion will destroy society.

(Yen, I, 32)

We can notice in the first passage that Huxley has duly made acknowledgement of the contribution of Adam Smith, not only in the text, but also with a footnote. In the translated passage Huxley's acknowledgement of Adam Smith is omitted. But the name of Adam Smith reappears later in his commentaries in which Yen sagely points out: "Furthermore, the theory that fellow-feeling (sympathy) is the origin of human society was first advocated by Adam Smith, the economist. It is not a new theory contributed by Huxley."³⁹

Fourth, there are questionable substitutions. When comparing modern thought with Indian and Greek philosophy, Huxley more than once points out the fact that twenty-six centuries has passed. In Yen's translation we find twenty-six centuries is replaced by four thousand and odd years. Yen of course makes this change on the basis that he is addressing the Chinese readers who have a longer history. But the change is a dubious one, for the context does not warrant it. The beginning passage of Chapter 15, Vol II, is a good example:

The human mind today does not differ from what it was four thousand and odd years ago. A science can be likened to a dried-up river. When the river has gone dry, nothing but a waste of sands and withered rushes remains between the banks. Once the river returns to its old course, the water will again wend its winding way to the sea. The doctrine of evolution is just like this. Those who are not informed take it for a new science.

Huxley's original text runs as follows:

Modern thought is making a fresh start from the base whence Indian and Greek philosophy set out; and, the human mind being very much what it was six-and-twenty centuries ago, there is no ground for wonder if it presents indications of a tendency to move along the old lines to the same results.

We can see that Yen has gone out of his way to make the change to please the literati. In making a special effort to please, he has unfortunately overlooked the fact that the doctrine of evolution did not begin four thousand and odd, but two thousand and six hundred years ago.

Fifth, Yen sometimes makes inadvertent mistranslations. Considering the impermanence of the state of nature and pointing out the slowness of change, Huxley writes:

It [the view from Huxley's room] may have lasted twenty or thirty thousand years, it may last for twenty or thirty thousand years more, without obvious change.

(Huxley, 4)

In Yen's translation we find:

What we see before us may not change until twenty or thirty years later. It is also possible that it may not change until twenty or thirty thousand years have elapsed.

(Yen, I, 2)

The first "twenty or thirty thousand years" in Huxley's text is sharply reduced to a mere "twenty or thirty years" in Yen's translation. The difference is a thousand-fold. There is a slim possibility that Yen makes the change on purpose for the sake of contrast. If that were the case, he does it at the expense of scientific rigour. A more probable reason for the difference is Yen's negligence.

As a whole, *T'ien-yen lun* is a successful translation. Its shortcomings are of little consequence. Politically, the work is significant in that it has filled the need of the time. Literarily, it is the first major translation of Western works. Though measured by a strict modern standard the work is not flawless, it will last as a literary monument for its intrinsic beauty. It can be enjoyed as an original Chinese literary masterpiece. Yen's political value may rise or fall, his introduction of Western social sciences to China and his true patriotism will forever be appreciated by later generations. As to his

literary position in the history of Chinese literature, no one will doubt its security. He is one of the leading translators of China and will remain so in the future.

Notes

1. See the introduction by Louis Hartz in Benjamin Schwartz, *In Search of Wealth and Power: Yen Fu and the West*, (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1964), p. xx.
2. See, for example, Yuen Ren Chao 趙元任, "Dimensions of Fidelity in Translation with Special Reference to Chinese," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 29 (1969), 109-30 and Huang Hsuan-fan 黃宣範, *Chung Yin fan-i: Li-lun yü shih-chien* 中英翻譯：理論與實踐 [Translation between Chinese and English: Theory and Practice], 2nd ed. (Taipei: Wen-ho, 1978).
3. See Benjamin Schwartz, pp. 92-95.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 96-97, 121-22, and 141.
5. T. H. Huxley, *Evolution and Ethics and Other Essays* (London, 1929), pp. v-viii and 1.
6. Janet E. Courtney, "Thomas Henry Huxley," in *Freethinkers of the Nineteenth Century*, (London, 1920), p. 167.
7. Wang Shih 王斌, *Yen Fu chuan* 嚴復傳 (Shanghai, 1957), p. 34.
8. Schwartz, p. 91 and Y. C. Wang, *Chinese Intellectuals and the West*, p. 202.
9. Yen, "Preface" in *T'ien-yen lun* 天演論, 3rd ed. (Taipei: Commercial Press, 1967), p. iii.
10. Huxley, p. viii.
11. Y. C. Wang, p. 202.
12. Schwartz, p. 100.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 103.
14. Schwartz, p. 103.
15. The two allusions here simply mean that his opinions are suggestive and that he invites his readers to discuss them with him. As to the allusion to *Shih Ching* 詩經, 'ying chiu 嚶求' ('Ying' they cry, / Each searching its mate's voice), see Arthur Waley, *The Book of Songs* 2nd ed. (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1954), p. 204.
16. Yen, "I li-yen," in *T'ien-yen lun*, p. iii.
17. Schwartz, p. 93.
18. Schwartz, pp. 92 ff.
19. Yen, "I li-yen," in *T'ien-yen lun*, pp. i-ii.
20. A. C. Baugh, *A History of the English Language*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1963),

- p. 244.
21. This device is suggested by his mentor of style, Wu Ju-lun. All chapter headings, according to Yen himself, are contributed by Wu. Since they are a part of the translation and for the sake of convenience, I will refer to them as Yen's. See Yen, "I li-yen," in *T'ien-yen lun*, p. ii.
 22. Chieh (1818–1766 B.C.) and Chou (1154–1122 B.C.), last rulers of the Hsia and Shang Dynasties respectively, are notorious man-slaughters.
 23. See especially Aldo Lepold, *A Sand County Almanac* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1949).
 24. Courtney, p. 166.
 25. P'eng Chu and Lao Tan are the Methuselahs of China.
 26. The main clause of this sentence is a quotation from *Chuang Tzu*.
 27. By the help of Miss Hui-keng Chang, one of my learned colleagues, I have managed to paraphrase the Latin quotation as follows: "And indeed I am used to going over to the foreign camp, not as a defector, but as an explorer."
 28. This is Watson's translation. See Burton Watson, trans., *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), pp. 240–41.
 29. Pu Shih is a famous patriotic shepherd of Han Dynasty, who contributes his wealth to the cause of defending against the northern barbarians. Po I 伯翳, not to be confused with the virtuous scholar Po I 伯夷, is the groom of the fabulous King Yü of Hsia Dynasty (2207–2198 B.C.).
 30. Here Huxley himself provides us with a footnote which runs as follows: "Esther v, 9–13. ' . . . but when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate, that he stood not up, nor moved for him, he was full of indignation against Mordecai . . . And Haman told them of the glory of his riches . . . and all the things wherein the king had promoted him . . . Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate.' What a shrewd exposure of human weakness it is!"
 31. This is also an allusion to *Chuang Tzu*. See the first chapter of *Chuang Tzu* in Watson's translation.
 32. See Yen I, 20, II, 15, 20, and II, 14, 16 for instances of the use of the names Yüan-tu, T'ien-chu, and Chu-ch'ien respectively.
 33. Yen, II, 6 and 37.
 34. Examples can be found in Yen, I, 25, II, 9, and II, 32 respectively.
 35. Yen, II, 9 and 33.
 36. The sage of Abdera refers to Democritus, father of the evolution theory. In II, 31 Yen uses the place name to stand for the Greek philosopher. Three pages later (II, 34), A-po-chih-la becomes Ya-po-ti-la.
 37. Examples can be found in Yen, II, 51 and 40 respectively.
 38. Here Huxley documents the reference with a footnote as follows: " 'Theory of the Moral Sentiments,' Part iii, chap. 3. *On the influence and authority of conscience.*"
 39. Yen, I, 32–33.

