

**A Report on the Translation of *Blooming in the Ruins*——
How Mexican Philosophy Can Guide Us toward the Good Life
(Chapters 7-8)**

**《在废墟中绽放——墨西哥哲学如何引导我们走向美好生活》
(第七、八章) 翻译实践报告**

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1 Introduction

In today's context of globalization and diversification, the exchange and collision of different cultures and philosophies have brought a wealth of intellectual resources. Mexican philosophy, as an important branch of Latin American philosophy, provides a unique theoretical perspective and practical value. This translation practice report focuses on Chapters 7 and 8 of the book *Blooming in the Ruins—How Mexican Philosophy Can Guide Us toward the Good Life*. Under the guidance of Functional Equivalence Theory, the aim is to carry out translation practice and explore the linguistic characteristics and textual features of philosophical text through case analysis, as well as the translation methods and techniques used in translation.

Blooming in the Ruins—How Mexican Philosophy Can Guide Us toward the Good Life, published in December 2024, was written by Dr. Carlos Alberto Sánchez, a philosopher and professor at San José State University. This book has a total of 28 chapters, and it is mainly an introduction to major Mexican philosophical themes in 20th century. Chapter 7 and 8 were selected for English-Chinese translation practice.

In Chapter 7, the author used his personal experience to introduce Mexican philosopher Emilio Uranga's theory of "ontological auscultation"—capturing the essence of cultural spirit (such as "lo mexicano") and individual existence through philosophical listening. As a descendant of immigrants, the author used his own "post-immigrant fear" to illustrate how facing trauma and heeding inner anxieties may trigger a "self-diagnosis" mechanism—the simultaneous understanding of "what one is" and "one's existence", thereby breaking social stereotypes and establishing identity legitimacy.

Chapter 8 shifted towards exploring the value of life, critiquing the luxurious graveyard of drug lords, analyzing the impact of materialism on the alienation of humanity, and proposing solutions through philosopher Antonio Caso's three modes of existence—"economic existence", "disinterested existence" and "charitable existence"). It emphasized "charitable existence"—by sacrificing self-interest and dedicating surplus energy to others, one can transition from "lonely egoism" to "spiritual freedom".

The significance of this translation practice report can be divided into two aspects. In

theoretical terms, this practice will be conducted under the guidance of Functional Equivalence Theory, and will explore its practical application in philosophical text translation. In practical terms, this translation practice report will analyze and summarize the application of translation methods and techniques in philosophical texts. In the process of achieving the goal of improving the quality of the translation, it will also provide a reference for the translation practice of similar texts.

2 Literature Review

Eugene A. Nida was a prominent translation theory scholar in the 20th century, and his most well-known achievement lies in proposing the theory of functional equivalence, which fundamentally overturns the traditional paradigm of translation studies, shifting its focus from a sole emphasis on language structure to communication function and reader feedback.

Nida & Taber (2004) clearly defined the key difference between “formal correspondence” and “functional equivalence”, emphasizing that excellent translation work should not be limited to superficial formal similarities, but should strive to achieve equivalent communicative effects. This classification fundamentally changes the criteria for translation evaluation.

Foreign studies on Functional Equivalence Theory exhibit three key characteristics: critical theoretical inheritance, interdisciplinary expansion, and increasingly sophisticated practical applications.

In terms of theoretical criticism, scholars like Snell-Hornby (1988) argues that this theory oversimplifies cultural differences and suggests supplementing it with the theory of Communicative Equivalence. In terms of interdisciplinary expansion, Toury (1995) incorporated functional equivalence into the “normative theory”, emphasizing the social function of translation rather than absolute equivalence (such as the difference between the “form priority” of law translation and the “effect priority” of advertisement translation). In terms of practical applications, Li (2021) summarizes the evolution of Functional Equivalence Theory into three stages, acknowledging its impact on translation but highlighting issues like cultural-lexical gaps, translator subjectivity neglect, and potential source-culture erosion.

The domestic research on the Functional Equivalence Theory is witnessing a thriving trend. Researchers in China have not only focused on the theoretical framework and translation standards of the theory but also placed great emphasis on its effects in practical applications.

Zhang & Bao (2024) explored the challenges and strategies in translating scientific texts utilizing the Functional Equivalence Theory, emphasizing how it aids translators in conveying the original information and intention more effectively. Xu (2004) conducted extensive research in the field of children’s literature translation, highlighting the importance of harmonizing language style with children’s character traits and functional equivalence in cross-cultural communication.

But there is a clear disciplinary divide and research gap in the current academic research on philosophical text translation and Functional Equivalence Theory. From the current research status of philosophical text translation, there is a significant tendency in the Western academic community: technical text has received more academic attention, while research on translation strategies for literary expressions in European philosophy is relatively weak.

Domestic research also shows an unbalanced trend, with research focus mainly on two areas: one is the translation and introduction of traditional Chinese philosophical classics (such as *The Analects of Confucius* and *Zhuangzi*), and the other is the terminology translation of Western philosophical classics (such as Heidegger and Kant's philosophy). It is worth noting that philosophical prose, a special type of text that combines literary aesthetic characteristics and philosophical depth, has not yet received the academic attention it deserves.

Also, foreign and domestic scholars have conducted few studies on the application of the Functional Equivalence Theory in philosophical texts. Nord (1997) explored the application of the Functional Equivalence Theory in complex texts, emphasizing that translators need to find a balance between being faithful to the original text and adapting to the target language readers. This study positions philosophical texts within the realm of complex texts, offering insights for translating philosophical works. Li (2013) proposed that the translation of Chinese philosophical ideas is important in promoting the dissemination of Chinese culture to the outside world, but previous research has mostly focused on the translation of traditional philosophical ideas, lacking in the translation and analysis of life philosophy.

At the same time, the difficulties in translating philosophical texts are relatively clear. Due to the differences and complexities between languages and cultures, achieving full equivalence is often an arduous task. Newmark (1988) argues that in texts highly dependent on linguistic form, such as philosophy and poetry, disparities in syntax, semantics, as well as differences in philosophical ideas and values under different cultural backgrounds can make functional equivalence challenging to attain.

The application of Functional Equivalence Theory in philosophical text translation has been limited in academic circles abroad and home, thus combining Functional Equivalence Theory with philosophical text translation can not only broaden its application boundaries but also provide theoretical perspectives and methodological support for philosophical text translation research. This field holds immense potential for further exploration and development.

3 Task Description

Translation is not merely a linear task of converting words from one language to another, it is a structured process involving pre-translation, while-translation, and post-translation refinement.

Pre-translation is crucial for ensuring translation quality and improving translation efficiency. The translator first conducted a comprehensive reading of the entire text to attain a thorough comprehension of its contextual background and the author's underlying intent. The translator then proceeded to develop a term list, which not only helps maintain consistency in the translation style and ensures uniformity in translation quality but also enhances translation efficiency.

Of course, the use of translation tools is indispensable during the translation process. Tools such as the Oxford Dictionary, Youdao Translation, as well as platforms like Tmxmall or Yufan Terminology Bank can assist the translator in looking up unfamiliar vocabulary and compiling glossaries. Additionally, the translator conducted literature searches through platforms like CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure), SpringerLink, and Google Scholar to obtain parallel texts that support the translation process.

Preparation marks the first step; once finished, the translation work starts. In the process of translation, the translator needed to address multiple dimensions simultaneously, including linguistic conversion, cultural adaptation, and logical coherence. Under the guidance of Functional Equivalence Theory, the translation should exhibit fluency and consistency across lexical, syntactic, and textual levels.

The post-translation is a crucial step for identifying and correcting omissions or errors in the translation process and ensuring translation quality, enhancing professionalism, and its importance cannot be ignored.

At this stage, it is necessary to systematically proofread and correct language errors that may have been overlooked or generated during the translation process. In addition, it is necessary to optimize the format and layout, adjust the document structure, and align visual elements. By refining sentence structures and adjusting tone, the fluency and readability of the translation can be further improved.

4 Case Analysis

According to Waard & Nida (1986), functional equivalence can be divided into two layers: minimal equivalence and maximal equivalence. In practice, the pursuit of the highest degree of reciprocity is difficult to achieve, so the translator strove to approach this ideal goal as much as possible.

Example 1:

ST: Autognosis

TT:自我认知

Analysis: “Auto-” comes from the Greek alphabet *αὐτός* (*autós*), meaning “of or by yourself”; “-gnosis” comes from the Greek word *γνῶσις* (*gnôsis*), meaning “cognition”, “knowing”. These two etymological roots constitute the semantic foundation for the philosophical term “autognosis”.

The translator strictly followed the original meaning of the ancient Greek roots, and translated the term as “自我认知”, which achieves equivalence in both meaning and form. The translator also focused on the modern application of these two root words. For example:

- ① “Auto-” in psychology: autonomy—自主性; autobiography—自传;
- ② “Auto-” in medicine: autophagy—自噬; autoimmunity—自身免疫;
- ③ “Auto-” in science and technology: automation—自动化;
- ④ “-gnosis” in modern medical terminology: diagnosis—诊断; prognosis—预后;
- ⑤ “-gnosis” in cognitive science: metacognition—元认知.

“Autognosis” was translated into “自我认知”, in which “auto-” corresponds exactly to “自我” and “-gnosis” translates appropriately into “认知” (emphasizing on dynamic cognitive processes rather than static knowledge). This translation not only keeps the etymological accuracy, but also conforms to the norms of modern psychology and philosophical terms. It avoids the special religious meaning of “gnostic” (灵知) in Northernism, and embodies the core principle of Functional Equivalence Theory— under the premise of accurately conveying the concept of source language, the most natural and professional expression of the target language is preferred, so that professional readers can obtain the same conceptual understanding as the source language readers, and at the same time ensure the applicability of the term in the academic system of the target language.

Example 2:

ST: the good

TT:至善

Analysis: The word “Good” generally refers to “high quality”, “pleasant”, “sensible/strong”, “favorable”, “skillful”, “kind”. The translator translated “the good” into “至善” (“至” means “the most” in Chinese) by realizing three levels of equivalence.

The first is cultural equivalence. In the fields of Chinese philosophy and ethics, “至” is often combined with some words that express morality and quality to express an ideal and highest level. For example, “至仁” represents the highest state of benevolence, which is a kind of love without reservation, without partiality, and with the purest purity. “至诚”, which expresses extreme sincerity without the slightest falsehood, is a noble moral quality. “至善” also expresses the highest and ultimate idea of good in Chinese, which coincides with the ultimate and perfect semantic meaning of good contained in “the good”.

In terms of language style, the source text is concise and meaningful, and expresses profound philosophical concepts in an abstract and general way. The target text is also simple and powerful, and conveys the profound meaning of extreme goodness in two words, which is consistent with the original style. In the translation of philosophical texts, this style of equivalence helps to maintain the academic nature and seriousness of the original text, so that readers can feel the style characteristics similar to the original text, and achieve functional equivalence at the style level.

The most important is that the reader's response level has also achieved equivalence. For English readers, seeing "the good" in the philosophical context will associate with a series of related philosophical thoughts and values, which will lead to in-depth thinking on issues such as morality and value. Translating "the good" into "至善" will enable Chinese readers to understand "善" based on their own cultural backgrounds, connect it with related concepts in Confucianism, Taoism and other thoughts, produce similar reactions to English readers.

Example 3:

ST: Lo mexicano

TT:墨西哥性

Analysis: In Spanish, "lo" is a neutral definite article (*artículo neutro*) used to modify adjectives, past participles or certain abstract concepts by nominalizing them and expressing a generic, abstract nature or state. Its usage and meaning are similar to the English "the + adjective" or Chinese "...的东西/事情/性质".

Examples:

Original Sentence	Literal Translation	Natural Translation
Lo bueno de la vida es viajar.	好的东西 在生活中是旅行。	生活的美好之处在于旅行。
Lo importante es la salud.	重要的东西 是健康。	最重要的是健康。
Lo dicho es cierto.	说过的东西 是真的。	刚才说的是真的。

The Spanish word "Mexicano" means "Mexican", that is "from or connected with Mexico". In this context, "lo mexicano" represents a kind of Mexican essence or the core of Mexican culture. Translating it directly as "墨西哥的东西" would lose its philosophical meaning. The choice of using the suffix "-性" in Chinese to convey abstract meanings and being translated as "墨西哥性", preserves the academic and philosophical nature of the term. This not only fits with the context and achieves conceptual equivalence, but also avoids excessive domestication—for example, "墨西哥精神" may narrow down its meaning.

Example 4:

ST: The moment has arrived for me and you to reject the image of ourselves that has been imposed upon us—to reject the "impostor within," that copy of ourselves that gets offended by billboards or by people who have no idea that such resentment exists.

TT:此刻，正是你我拒绝他人强加给我们的自我形象之时——拒绝内心的“冒牌货”，那个会因广告牌或无觉知之人的言行而愤怒的虚假自我。

Analysis: ST contains two passive structures:

(1)"...the image...that has been imposed upon us"

Literal translation: 被强加于我们的形象。

Natural translation: 他人强加给我们的自我形象。

(2)"...that copy of ourselves that gets offended by..."

Literal translation: 那个被.....冒犯的自我复制品。

Natural translation: 那个会因……而愠怒的虚假自我。

In the phrase “the image... that has been imposed upon us”, the translator used a structure with the Chinese character “给” instead of using “被”, transforming “我们被强加” into “强加给我们”. This results in an explicit passive construction being converted into an implicit one in Chinese. In the sentence “that copy of ourselves that gets offended by...”, the translator chose to transform the passive victim relationship into an active causal expression, which is also a way of converting passive voice. The passive structures in source text are not mechanically retained, but transformed into more natural active expressions in Chinese. At the same time, equivalent translations of words such as “impostor within”, “copy of ourselves” etc., demonstrate the Functional Equivalence Theory vividly.

Example 5:

ST: Getting out of yourself by surrendering your ego frees you from that terror of being trapped in your own ego desires, in constantly bending to the demands of selfishness.

TT:通过放下小我，你终将从这恐怖中解脱——那困于自我欲望的牢笼，不断屈从自私要求的生存状态。

Analysis: Source text is a complex compound sentence, using the gerund phrase “Getting out of yourself by surrendering your ego” as the subject. The main proposition is introduced through the predicate verb “frees”, followed by a prepositional phrase “from that terror...” which elaborates on the specifics of liberation. The core structure of the sentence presents a logical relationship between method and result. During the translation process, the translator divided the original sentence into two meaningful groups and separates them with a dash.

The translation of this sentence reflects the equivalent handling of core concepts. For example, “surrendering your ego” translates to “放下小我”: adopting the philosophical concept of “小我” to correspond to “ego” and retaining a religious-philosophical hue. At the same time, the translation of “being trapped in” as “困于……的牢笼” has abstractly visualized the concept and reinforced the emotional coherence and meaning of the sentence. “Demands of selfishness” is translated as “自私要求” rather than “自私之需”, which better reflects the negative connotation in Chinese expression habits.

Example 6:

ST: The enthusiasm for charity comes from outside the self, motivated by a non-self, a non-I, who may be a friend, a stranger, a humanitarian cause, or, even, God.

TT:换言之，对慈善生活的热忱并非源于自我或主我驱动，而是来自超越性存在——可能是友人、陌生人、人道事业，甚至上帝。

Analysis: The translation of this sentence should be divided into three parts.

First, the word “self” is translated as “自我” and the word “I” is translated as “主我”— the translator believes that “self” has a higher level of meaning than “I”. “Self” can be understood as the entirety of an individual’s existence, including their identity, consciousness, and personality. On the other hand, “I” represents the subject of thinking

and awareness, focusing more on subjectivity. For example:

“I think about myself.” → “我思考我自己。”

It is not difficult to notice that “I” is the subject of thinking, and “myself” is the object being thought about. It is evident that “I” could refer to the “subject self” (the thinking self), while “self” can refer to the “object self” (the observed self). Therefore, to make a distinction, the translator translated “self” as “自我” and “I” as “主我” to indicate the difference between the two words.

Second, the translator transferred the negation meaning which is expressed by “non”, instead of translating it directly as “被一种非自我或非主我驱动”, which will make the translation more in line with Chinese expression habits.

Furthermore, the translator employed the method of amplification and added the phrase “超越性存在”, which not only better connected the preceding and following sentences, but also summarized the hidden character of “friend”, “stranger”, “humanitarian cause”, and “God”.

Example 7:

ST: The moment of crisis has arrived, the instant of discomfort, in which we feel that the style of being with which we have become accustomed is not appropriate and authentic, and the violent gesture with which we have tried to rid ourselves of it has made us see that, by detaching ourselves from the spurious, we likewise rid ourselves of a mask. [O]ur autognosis articulates... the imperative of unmasking, of radically refuting the “impostor” within us... after this, [whatever remains] is no longer exclusively a Mexican returned to his truth, but is more accurately a person—simply a human being.

TT: 危机时刻已然降临——在这个令人不安的瞬间，我们蓦然惊觉：自己习以为常的存在方式既不恰当，也不真实。而当我们试图以激烈姿态挣脱这种状态时，却发现在剥离虚假外壳的同时，我们也撕下了一副面具。我们的自我认知过程昭示着……一种去伪存真的绝对命令，要求彻底否定内在的“冒名者”……在此之后，[存留之物]已不仅是一个重归本真的墨西哥人，更准确地说，是一个纯粹的人——仅此而已。

Analysis: The source text is a philosophical discourse brimming with speculative depth, characterized by a linguistic style that harmonizes abstraction, metaphorical richness, rhythmic cadence, and emotional intensity. The translation meticulously preserves the original’s philosophical tenor. Key conceptual renderings demonstrate both scholarly precision and idiomatic fluency—e.g., “style of being” becomes “存在方式” rather than the literal “存在风格”; “autognosis” is translated as “自我认知” while retaining its Greek etymological annotation, achieving equilibrium between academic rigor and accessibility. The lexical selection of “冒名者”(impostor) over the more generic “骗子”(cheater) more precisely conveys the philosophical metaphor of an “inner false self”. This choice is further reinforced by the classical Chinese idiom “去伪存真”(eliminate the false and preserve the

true), which accentuates the conceptual nuance. Particularly noteworthy is the deployment of “去伪存真” which not only encompasses the denotative meaning of “unmasking” but also incorporates culture-specific connotations, accomplishing a creative transposition of cultural imagery.

Simultaneously, the translation recreates the original’s emotional resonance through artful syntactic restructuring. The dash-laden treatment of “The moment of crisis has arrived, the instant of discomfort...” maintains the source text’s urgency while conforming to Chinese punctuation conventions; the four-character phrase “蓦然惊觉” (sudden awakening) surpasses mundane alternatives in literary potency, precisely conveying the epiphanic tone of the original.

5 Conclusion

First and foremost, the selection of theoretical approach must closely align with the text type. The source text selected for this translation represents a distinctive hybrid genre within philosophical writing—occupying an intermediary position between formal academic discourse and purely literary composition. This genre synthesizes substantive philosophical inquiry with stylistic fluidity characteristic of prose exposition.

Secondly, for the translation of philosophical terms and loanwords, literal translation is the most appropriate choice, and the cultural factors behind the vocabulary should also be considered. The term “lo mexicano”, for instance, required careful consideration to preserve both the original Spanish structure and its nuanced cultural connotations within the text, achieving equivalence in both content and form.

Also, during the literature review process, the translator identified two key findings: (1) the international academic community demonstrates a relative paucity of specialized research on philosophical text translation; (2) there exists a significant research gap regarding the application of Functional Equivalence Theory in philosophical translation, both domestically and internationally. This posed significant challenges in the application of theoretical frameworks, compelling the translator to extract applicable translation strategies through in-depth analysis of limited available literature. This situation also highlights the considerable academic exploration still needed in this research area.

In the translation practice, despite being a native Chinese speaker, the translator encountered notable difficulties when dealing with the complex sentence structures and abstract concepts characteristic of philosophical texts. The main challenges included: (1) the difficulty in converting certain English long sentences with multiple clauses into syntactically natural Chinese expressions; (2) the phenomenon of “semantic gaps” in some philosophical terms, leading to situations where the translator “understood the meaning but struggled to find the right words”. These issues not only underscore the unique challenges of philosophical text translation but also reveal the translator’s current limitations in bilingual conversion skills and professional competence.