A Review of Anthony Pym's Translator Ethics

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Abstract— *This paper further reviews translator ethics thoughts proposed by Anthony Pym from the following three main aspects: the view of translation determines the view of translation ethics, the identity of translators, translator's responsibility and intercultural cooperation. It has been found that from the perspective of translation profession, Pym clarifies the identity of the translator, takes the translator's responsibility as the basis of translation ethic basis, and aims at contributing intercultural cooperation. Although the construction of translator-centered translation ethics is of great value and innovative significance, there are still many points worthy of further discussion, such as the scope of application of translator ethics, other types of the identity of translators, Whether "Translator Ethics" can take replace of "Translation Ethics" and under what circumstances it is best for translators not to translate and so on.*

Keywords— *Anthony Pym; interculture; translation; translator ethics.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Anthony Pym is an internationally renowned scholar and director of the European Society for Translation Studies. He has taught in many universities and published more than 200 papers and 28 monographs and editors. His representative works include *Translation and Text Transfer: An Essay on the Principles of Intercultural Communication, Method in Translation History, On Translator Ethics, Exploring Translation Theories* and the newly published *What is the History of Translation.*

Pym is one of the early scholars who began to pay attention to the ethics of translation. In 1992, Chapter 7 of *Translation and Text Conversion: on the Principles of Intercultural Communication* made a theoretical discussion on the basic principles of translation ethics. Fang Wei (2017) believed that these principles set the foundation for the construction of Pym's professional ethics, and were further developed in *On Translator Ethics* in 1997.

In 1997, Pym published the monograph entitled *Pour une éthique du traducteur*, which made a detailed discussion on the ethical issues of translation. In 2017, he edited the special issue of *The Translator*, entitled *The Return to Ethics*. Fang Wei (2001) believed that this book was one of the representative works in the exploration of translation professional ethics in the West. "The publication of this special issue marks the beginning of the introduction of translation ethics into the vision of translation researchers" (Guan, 2012: 86). In 2012, Heike Walker translated the French version of *Pour une éthique du traducteur* into English, revised by Pym himself, and added Pym's new ideas on translation and translation ethics, which were attached to 1 to 6 chapters respectively, and the title of the book was changed to on translator Ethics. *The Map: A Beginner's Guide to Doing Research in Translation Studies* published in 2002 expands the scope of translation ethics studies and lays a solid theoretical foundation for the study of professional translation ethics and translator personal ethics (Williams & Chesterman, 2002).

Wang (2005) believed that the study of translation ethics was the need of translation itself, and it is beneficial and necessary to bring ethics into translation studies. Xin (2018) commented that Pym's thought of translation ethics was one of the representatives of the mainstream of translation ethics in west. Pym's thoughts on translator ethics play an important role in the field of translation ethics, so it is necessary to summarize and comment on his

thoughts on translator ethics. Many scholars at home and abroad (Xin, 2018; Guan, 2012; Koskinen, 2016) interpret his ethical thoughts to varying degrees. Combined with Pym's original works and related papers, this paper clarifies Pym's thoughts on translator ethics, affirms its advantages and points out the ambiguities in Pym's thoughts, which is helpful to better understand Pym's thoughts about translator ethics.

II. THE VIEW OF TRANSLATION DETERMINES THE VIEW OF TRANSLATION ETHICS

Antoine Berman, a French literary translator and translation theorist, put forward the concept of "translation ethics" in the early 1980s, which introduced ethical issues into the thinking of translation theory, creating a new research direction for translation studies. It has also aroused the attention and discussion of many scholars at home and abroad on the ethics of translation activities.

Pym's reflection on translation ethics began with the criticism of Berman's translation ethics thought. Pym was convinced that Berman's thought about translation ethics was too rigid, too knowledgeable and too abstract (Pym, 1997). Pym criticizes that Behrman's abstract ideas about translation ethics do not give much guidance to translation practice, and the disconnection between translation ethics studies and translation practice is still very obvious (Liu, 2014). Pym believes that the reason for this situation is that there is a problem with Berrman's definition of translation activities. In Pym's view, the translation of literary and philosophical classics is only a very limited part of the whole translation activity, which is far from containing and representing all rich content in translation practice. Therefore, it is impossible to interpret the various behaviors and problems involved in the professional activities of translation. The translation ethics derived from this view of translation is inevitably characterized by over-abstraction and over-knowledge.

In the context of globalization, literary translation, which used to be at the core of traditional translation studies, is no longer the mainstream in terms of quantity, scale and market share (Tang, 2007). Based on this understanding, Pym deems that translation is a communicative act, a professional service for a client and a given recipient, and the translator who provides the service is at the junction of two cultures, and he does not belong to any one of the cultural communities (Pym, 1997). Moreover, translation is not only an intercultural communication activity, but also a professional translation gets paid, including translation, interpretation, simultaneous interpretation, consecutive Interpreting, film translation, subtitle translation and other forms of translation. Zhang (2016) stressed that the translator's ethical responsibility should be faithful to the whole translation profession. Pym's understanding and orientation of translation activities fundamentally determine the ethical position of translation, which is Pym's basic view on the relationship between translation and translation ethics. It is also the starting point for him to think about the ethical issues in translation activities (Liu, 2014). To clarify Pym's definition of the connotation of translation activities, Pym's translation ethics is also clearly visible, that is, a translator-centered translation professional ethics with a more social dimension. In other words, "This is a utilitarian translation ethic guided by a certain translation purpose and taking into account social, economic factor and translator's rights" (Wang, 2005: 46). In a word, Pym's translator-centered translation professional ethics helps to solve the long-standing problem of disconnection between theory and practice in the field of translation.

III. THE IDENTITY OF TRANSLATORS

First of all, Xin(2018) found that in *On Translator Ethics: Principles for Mediation between Cultures*, Pym highlighted that attention should be broadened to all people who make the translation, including not only the professional translators he emphasized in the past, but also anyone who works as a temporary translator. This is because Pym not only skillfully masters the application of high and new technology in translation, but also observes the "democratizing technology" in translation (Pym, 2012: 11), that is, ordinary readers can also translate with the help of translation memory software, corpus and so on. Many translation tasks around the world are performed by deputy

translators. Finnish scholar Koskinen also pays attention to Pym's changes in this aspect (Koskinen, 2016).

Pym clearly defines the scope of the translator and has his own unique views on the identity of the translator. Xin (2018) summarized the identity of the translator Pym defined: the translator was mainly in the intercultural space, which was neither the source language / culture nor the target language / culture. The translator is between the two cultures and is the bridge between the two cultures (Ke, 2002). A domestic scholar (Guan, 2012) thinks that Pym's concept of "intercultural space" is novel and unique, is of great importance. "the concept of intercultural space put forward by Pym solves the problem of the identity of translator, which enables the translator to get rid of the shackles of swinging between the source text and the target text, and is free to choose translation strategies according to the situation". Thus the problem of how to translate left behind after the concept of translation equivalence has been dispelled has been solved. Koskinen (2000) also expressed deep doubts about Pym's intercultural space in her doctoral thesis: regarding the translator as an impartial inhabitant, in a mysterious no-man's middle ground, Pym created an aura of simplicity and moral neutrality. The real intercultural space was just a dream. Another scholar (Zhu, 2009: 10) pointed out that "Pym represents the idealism that was lacking in the post-modern world". Pym's interpretation of the identity of translator is innovative, but it is too ideal and may not be suitable for all translators and all countries.

In Pym's view, as long as the space in which translation activities are carried out is in the confluence of many cultures, rather than in the interior of a certain culture, then the identity of the translator must have an essential intercultural attribute (Liu, 2014).
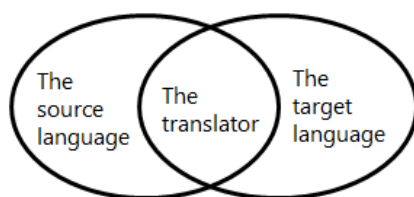

Fig.1: Intercultural Attribute of the Translator

Pym pays attention to the intercultural attribute of the translator's identity. At the same time, Pym also believes that most of the current translation ethics studies have ignored the attribute of translator's interculture. Liu (2014) and Wang (2008) concluded that Pym did not accept the translation ethics view that Schleiermacher and his followers derived from the dualistic model. For Schleiermacher, a good translator should follow the expression of the original work as much as possible, so that the reader can feel something exotic and have a feeling of facing a certain exotic feeling without traveling (Pym, 1997). However, if Pym insists on this view, Liu believes that (2014: 20) "This means that the identity of the translator cannot be bilingual or bicultural in nature, and he must be on the side of accepting culture". Therefore, it negates the view of the translator's intercultural identity. In short, a number of scholars (Wang, 2008; Liu, 2014; Wang, 2018) conclude that Pym opposes any view that puts the translator in a single cultural identity. Pym's reflection on the identity of the translator is also his basic position on the ethical issues of translation. However, there is not only one identity of the translator, and there are many other possibilities that are worth exploring.

Liu (2014) stressed the construction of a translator-centered ethic rather than an ethic aimed at translation for judging, that is, replacing translation ethics with translator ethics. However, ethics have both the function of guiding and the function of judging, otherwise it will not be ethics (He, 2008). Meschonnic calls for the urgent need to establish language ethics and translation ethics and believes that ethics is a behavioral problem. This behavior is directed either against yourself or against others. Ethics is about taking action to create value (Fang, 2017). "Translation ethics is how the facts of translation behavior should be regulated and how translation behavior should be standardized. It faces both translation behavior and the subject of translation behavior" (Wang, 2009: 63). Ethics and translation ethics also have normative functions. Therefore, this paper holds that the translator-centered translator ethics can't replace translation ethics.

IV.   TRANSLATOR'S RESPONSIBILITY AND INTERCULTURAL COOPERATION

In the translator ethics advocated by Pym, what is of fundamental significance is not faithfulness but responsibility, and the translator responsibility for the translation profession (Liu, 2014). Pym avoided using the word loyalty and focused on the word responsibility. However, faithfulness is also the core of the ethical issue, so how can we avoid talking about it (Shen & Tong, 2005)? In *Ethics and Politics of Translating*, Meschonnic also severely criticized Pym's translator ethics. Meschonnic pointed out that Pym deliberately replaces the concept of faithfulness with the translator's responsibility for the translation profession, which leads to although what he wanted is ethics, what he gets is only a kind of social morality (Meschonnic, 2007). In addition, Pym thinks that the concept of faithfulness is out of date, so he avoids talking about it. However, Tang (2007) put forward the idea of faithfulness in the articles or codes of many organizations about translation and even the International Federation of Translations. Although there are many imperfections in the thoughts of faithfulness, it is still valuable as an ethical concept. Therefore, faithfulness is the key word in the discussion of translation ethics (Zeng, 2008). Pym avoids talking about it, which is not the correct way to deal with it.

Liu (2014) pointed out that Pym proposed that the translator ethics are the core of translation ethics. The foundation of ethics lies in responsibility (Pym, 1997). A more detailed explanation is that the basis of the translator ethics lies in the translator's professional responsibility, and clearly points out that the prerequisite for the translator's professional responsibility is the translator's choice of whether it should be translated or not. In *on Translator Ethics: Principles for Mediation Between Cultures*, Pym put forward five principles for translator ethics, the first of which is the translator should be responsible for his translation from the time he decides to undertake the task of translation. Therefore, the key issue of translation ethics is not how it should be translated, but whether it should be translated or not (Pym, 1997). Therefore, the word responsibility is closely related to whether it should be translated or not. However, in the face of increasingly professional and commercial translation, some individual translators do not have the ability to choose whether they should translate or not. Pym is also aware that this is a problem that must be addressed, pointing out that translation ethics starts from professional groups, not individuals (Pym, 2010). Therefore, from the perspective of professional translation ethics, Pym broadens his attention to all translators, professional translators, including temporary translators, and proposes that it should be viewed from the perspective of translation profession rather than individual translators. Pym also suggested to enhance translators' decision-making ability for the aim of rising the process of professional translation and defended the fundamental interests of the translator community.

Pym's answer to the question whether it should be translated or not is concise and clear: it should be translated for promoting cooperation (Pym, 1997). Pym advocates striving to promote the establishment of long-term and stable intercultural cooperation through his work. If the condition of promoting cooperation in intercultural relations cannot be met, the translator had better choose not to translate. Under which circumstances it was best for the translator not to translate, but Pym did not elaborate. This paper thinks that this problem is worthy of in-depth discussion. Cooperation is another key word in the translator ethics advocated by Pym, and cooperation is essentially a win-win situation. "Cooperation is an ethical goal and the basis of translator ethics" (Bao, 2014: 90). Guan (2012) pointed out that Pym's win-win translation ethics underlined the maximization of the social benefits of translation and defines the responsibility of the translator with the goal of cooperation and cost reduction, which broadens the perspective of translation studies. Compared with the abstract loyalty ethics, it undoubtedly has stronger maneuverability, applicability and guidance. However, Xin (2018) questioned that cooperation can't be the ultimate goal of any translation, such as the translation of some classics, can promote the exchange and understanding between the two cultures, but not cooperation as the ultimate goal. Meschonnic's comments try to replace translation ethics with cooperation ethics, and the result

can only be reduced to the "market parsimony method" (Meschonnic, 2007: 15). Translators can give full play to their subjective initiative and make a profound reflection on translation ethics in particular translation situations (Baker & Maier, 2011).

"One should not put more effort into translating than would correspond to the rewards that the translation is likely to produce" (Pym, 2012: 134). Xin (2018) questioned how to calculate the value of the application of knowledge. Pym, as a translation practitioner and theorist, is also familiar with the application of high and new technology in translation, so he places special emphasis on the social dimension of translation, while his attention to the linguistic and aesthetic dimensions of translation is extremely limited. Although the translator is the core subject of translation activities, his subjective role is still restricted by poetics and other factors (Shen & Tong, 2005). Meschonnic also deems that Pym seems to know nothing about contemporary poetics (Meschonnic, 2007). The cooperative and win-win ethics of translators proposed by Pym is in line with the historical trend of globalization, which is of great significance, but it also has some shortcomings. This paper encourages translators to reflect on various ethical viewpoints independently and take active responsibility in the translation situation, instead of blindly following external authorities on ethical issues (Greenall & Alvstad & Jansen & Taivalkoski-Shilov, 2019).

V.   THE INNOVATION OF THE TRANSLATOR ETHICS

Compared with the previous researches of translation ethics, the translator ethics proposed by Pym provides a new direction for the study of translation ethics. The innovation is mainly reflected in the following aspects. First, it put forward a new direction in the translation ethics. From the perspective of translator's identity in translation, Pym came up with the concept of "intercultural space" and emphasized the translator's intercultural identity. According to his works, translators were defined as anyone engaged in translation and further clarified the characteristics of diversity of the translator ethics. Second,

Pym makes innovation in research content. Pym has a profound sociological knowledge background. He focuses on the treating translator as the subject and takes the translator's responsibility and translator's choice seriously. Secondly, Pym is one of few scholars who take the translator as the core point and explore the diversity of translator ethics from the perspective of translation profession. He no longer dwells on "how to translate", but focuses on "whether to translate" and "why to translate". Finally, some translation scholars tend to use obscure professional terms when expressing their views, so it is difficult for readers to understand their views and not mention to judge them. With his profound insight into contemporary western translation studies, Pym does not have this problem in the interpretation of translation ethics in the context of global translation. In a word, Pym promotes the study of translation ethics from professional norms to philosophical level, which is innovative to some extent.

VI.   CONCLUSION

In the context of globalization, Pym's translation ethics, which is constructed from the perspective of translation professionalization and around the three core key words: interculture, responsibility and cooperation, helps to solve the long-standing problem of disconnection between theory and practice in the field of translation. It opens up a new perspective for the study of translation ethics, but it is also ambiguous. The scope of application of Pym's interpretation of the identity of the translator, other possibilities of the identity of the translator, whether translator ethics can replace translation ethics, and under what circumstances it is best for the translator not to translate and so on.

In China, translation ethics are also becoming a focus of contemporary translation theories. It is also hoped that more scholars will participate in the process of translation ethics studies and pay attention to the standardization of the translation market, so as to promote the healthy, benign and orderly development of the translation industry.

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