

ROBINSON, Douglas (2015): *The Dao of Translation: An East-West Dialogue*. London/New York: Routledge, 256 p.

Hong Diao

Volume 61, Number 1, May 2016

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1036993ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1036993ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal

ISSN

0026-0452 (print)

1492-1421 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Diao, H. (2016). Review of [ROBINSON, Douglas (2015): *The Dao of Translation: An East-West Dialogue*. London/New York: Routledge, 256 p.] *Meta*, 61(1), 239–240. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1036993ar>

vers une terminologie dynamique portée par des bases de données en texte intégral. La combinaison des différents types d'information – linguistique, notionnel, graphique – est précieuse; elle demande à la fois un savoir-faire terminologique poussé, une expertise dans le domaine de spécialité visé et l'adaptation aux nouvelles technologies, qualités rarement réunies dans le même ouvrage.

JEANNE DANCETTE

Université de Montréal, Montréal, Canada

NOTES

1. Également disponible en ligne à <http://research.fh-ooe.at/de/publication/4233>
2. Signalons l'absence de mention du courant ontoterminologique (Roche, Temmerman) qui, selon nous, devrait être mieux exploité par les concepteurs d'ouvrages dictionnaires.
3. Le logiciel a été réalisé par les entreprises ProCom-Strasser et DocuMatrix. Voir <http://www.documatrix.com/index.php/home-de-produkte/proterm>

RÉFÉRENCES

- BOISTE, Pierre-Claude-Victoire (1823): *Dictionnaire universel de la langue française*. Verdrière, 523.
- LÖCKINGER, Georg (2011): User-Oriented Data Modelling in Terminography: State-of-the-Art Research on the Needs of Special Language Translators. In: Tatiana GORNOSTAY et Andrejs VASIJEVS, dir. *Proceedings of the Workshop CHAT 2011: Creation, Harmonization and Application of Terminology Resources*. NEALT Proceedings Series vol. 12. (Riga, Lettonie, 11 mai 2011). Northern European Association for Language Technology, 44-47.
- LÖCKINGER, Georg (2005): *Terrorismus, Terrorismusabwehr, Terrorismusbekämpfung. Einführung in das Fachgebiet, Methodik und Ergebnis einer Terminologearbeit in den Sprachen Englisch und Deutsch*. Vienne: Landesverteidigungsakademie.

ROBINSON, Douglas (2015): *The Dao of Translation: An East-West Dialogue*. London/New York: Routledge, 256 p.

As the title suggests, Douglas Robinson's *The Dao of Translation: An East-West Dialogue* applies Chinese Daoism and Confucianism to examine some theoretical topics in translation studies during a particular era of epistemological, ideological and social transformation. It is a major contribution that investigates the often complex and constantly accelerating interactions between the East and the West. It mobilizes two radically different readings of the Dao: the traditional "mystical" reading, according to which the Dao is an unearthly force

that cannot be comprehended, and a more updated reading put forward by sinologists Roger Ames and David Hall, to the effect that the Dao is simply the way things happen. As the eight chapters in this book amply demonstrate, there have never been "lines" or impassable barriers between Daoism and Confucianism on the one hand and Western philosophy on the other in approaching translation theory and practice. Indeed, Daoism is gaining popularity in the academic world in recent years as evidenced by the frequent use of "The Dao of X" in book titles: *The Tao of Programming* (Geoffrey James 1986), *The Dao of Rhetoric* (Steven C. Combs 2005), *The Tao of the Dude* (Oliver Benjamin 2014), and so on. This may be attributed to the increasing interest of scholars worldwide in China and its traditions as this country becomes more transparent and open and some of its philosophies remain largely unmined in a modern sense.

The author of *The Dao of Translation: An East-West Dialogue*, Douglas Robinson, has tactfully and intriguingly "set up an East-West dialogue to show not only how ancient Chinese thought can help us understand translation more ecologically, but also how ecological approaches to the study of translation can help us understand ancient Chinese thought more clearly" (p. 5).

The book's point of departure is the brief introduction to Dao, "something that precedes and undergirds conscious awareness of verbal intentions or expressions" (p. 11). In an attempt to put superficially divergent yet interestingly congruent perspectives into dialogue, Robinson goes on to analyze *Abductive Translation Studies: The Art of Marshalling Signs*, the doctoral dissertation of Ritva Hartama-Heinonen, a Finnish translation scholar. He argues that Hartama-Heinonen's conception that translation is passive, receptive, spontaneously surrendering to the sign and acting without effort is largely homologous to Laozi's concept of *wuwei*: acting without doing things and Mengzi's instruction *wu zhu zhang* or 'don't help grow' (p. 21). Suggesting that Hartama-Heinonen's critique is baffling and potentially incoherent without the grounding of *wuwei* (p. 21), he ventures to remedy the critique. Robinson then illustrates the possible "genetic" influence of traditional Chinese philosophy on Romantic and Idealist Thought and Western thinkers such as Charles Sanders Peirce and Ferdinand de Saussure. In chapters 3 and 4 Robinson shifts his critical perspective to examine firstly Peirce's Tensions between Habit and Surprise and then Saussure's Structuring Force in/of Language. In chapter 6 and 7, the author focuses on the analysis of the Dao of Habitus from the perspectives of Pierre Bourdieu's Body Automatism and Daniel Simeoni's Submissive Translator. The final part of this book summarizes the Dao as

"habit, or the functioning of collectivized habit in society and the functioning of collectivized habit" (p. 175) in everything, translation included.

As the former Dean of the Arts Faculty of Hong Kong Baptist University, Robinson has great insight into Chinese culture and enormous interest in exploring the interrelationship between Eastern and Western philosophy (another book of his, *The Deep Ecology of Rhetoric in Mencius and Aristotle*, is forthcoming). However, it is all too easy for the structure of such a book to spiral out of control and the comparison and analysis to fall into cliché. The author's assured grasp of argument and the diverse range of sources facilitate an intriguing and methodic presentation. By closely focusing on the affinity between ancient Chinese thought and modern Western concepts, he fashions a deftly integrated discussion which guides the readers from Kant, Emerson and Nietzsche to Peirce, Wittgenstein and Derrida. In doing so, Robinson shows "how Laozi, Mengzi, Peirce, Saussure, and Bourdieu all help us flesh out a complex understanding of how linguistic and cultural habits and surprises function across the gaps between individuals, groups, languages, cultures" (p. 5). This is an excellent book in translation theory and philosophy study. The following are its major attributes.

To begin with, *The Dao of Translation: An East-West Dialogue* is innovative and thought-provoking. The application of Daoism and Confucianism, though gaining popularity, is mainly confined to philosophy and politics study (see Ames 1991 and Benjamin 2014). Understanding translation in an ecological way demonstrated in Daoism and Confucianism makes translation study more diverse in methodological terms. Furthermore, the author elaborates the two different social ecologies, namely, icosis and ecosis, aiming at plausibilization and communal conformation to collective norms of goodness respectively. In addition, the book gives a fresh view of who is suited to be a good translator. In an age in which no absolute truths seem to exist in culture and society, Robinson's argument sounds very convincing.

Secondly, the book is coherent and well-structured. It is a harmonious combination of Chinese and Western thought and of a theoretical backdrop and practical operation. The distribution of chapters is highly appropriate. Nothing seems to be missing or superfluous. The material is adequately supported by numerous, though not tedious, references and bibliographical data. The author not only raises many questions but also provides reasonable answers. The richness of his arguments is impossible to replicate here, as is the deft manner with which he deals with a large number of examples based on his rich life experience.

Clear language is another advantage of this book. Examples in Chinese are transcribed into pinyin and translated into English. The whole edition is nicely-designed and presented.

However, this book is not without drawbacks. For instance, the author includes too many references to other people's research in the conclusion, which may weaken its originality to some degree. The conclusion, at least to my understanding, should be what the author wants the world to know.

While the book is grounded in translation theory and ancient philosophy, the greatest pleasure for readers will come from the profound and sophisticated observations presented in the confident and strong voice of a Culture Ambassador rather than merely a translation scholar. In sum, *The Dao of Translation: An East-West Dialogue* presents an expert, rich and animated analysis of the ways in which Eastern and Western thought on translation converge. This is an excellent book since it not only encourages the testing of established translation research paradigms, but also promotes the blending of the world's multicultures. As an erudite book, it is a very welcome addition to the field of translation studies.

HONG DIAO

Chongqing Technology and Business University,
Chongqing, China

REFERENCES

- AMES, Roger T. (1991): The Mencian Conception of Ren Xing: Does it Mean 'Human NATURE'? In: Henry ROSEMONT, Jr., ed. *Chinese Texts and Philosophical Contexts: Essays Dedicated to Angus C. Graham*. La Salle, IL: Open Court, 143-174.
- BENJAMIN, Oliver (2014): *The Tao of the Dude*. Amazon/CreateSpace.
- COMBS, Steven C. (2005): *The Dao of Rhetoric*. Albany: SUNY Press.
- JAMES, Geoffrey (1986): *The Tao of Programming*. Info.
- ROBINSON, Douglas (2016): *The Deep Ecology of Rhetoric in Mencius and Aristotle: A Somatic Guide*. Albany: SUNY Press.

MASSIDDA, Serenella (2015): *Audiovisual Translation in the Digital Age: The Italian Fansubbing Phenomenon*. Basingstoke/New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 117 p.

Cette monographie résulte de l'étude doctorale réalisée par l'auteure sur le milieu des *fansubbers* italiens. Son but est d'explorer les origines et l'évolution des pratiques amateurs afin de comprendre les profondes transformations vécues par le milieu