

**Supplementary Briefing
on
English Translation**

(The Academy of Sinology)

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What is considered a good translation ?

“That in which the merit of the original work is so completely transfused into another language, as to be as distinctly apprehended, and as strongly felt, by a native of the country to which that language belongs, as it is by those who speak the language of the original work.”

(Translation and Translating, Theory and Practice by Roger T. Bell.)

Three Basic Rules

- I. That the Translation should give a complete transcript of the ideas of the original work.**
- II. That the style and manner of writing should be of the same character with that of the original work.**
- III. That the Translation should have all the ease of original composition.**

What are the basic requirements in the English translation of Chinese essays?

- I. Grammar and Spelling have to be accurate. On-line software can be used to rectify grammatical and spelling errors. (i.e. complete transcript)**
- II. Accuracy and clarity of conveying the ideas of the original work is the first priority. (i.e. complete transcript and ease)**
- III. Art of emulating the spirit of the original work (i.e. style and manner) is the finale.**

What are the common weaknesses that Chinese share in English translation?

- I. Natural inclination to attempt to translate the text word by word to clutter up the clarity of expressing ideas.**
- II. Tendency of trying to put too much in ONE sentence to lose the focus of clarity.**
- III. Lack of suitable vocabulary to fall short of delivering the translation in the same style and manner of original work.**
- IV. Tendency of “embroidering” the translation with big words to lose the “ease” of reading.**

How to improve English translation without these weaknesses?

- I. Focus on fully understanding the key messages of the original work.**
- II. Use the simplest way to deliver the clarity of expressing the same messages. Remember simplicity is beauty and less is more.**
- III. Break the sentences properly to allow clarity of ideas to stand out with a better flow.**
- IV. Read renowned English newspaper or periodicals such as Times, New York Times, Wall Street Journal, South China Morning Post, National Geography and so on to learn how to do a concise and clear English writing.**
- V. Read all the reference materials that Professor Chou is introducing in the class of Sinology English to get familiarized with the key terminologies commonly used in the literatures of Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism.**

Translation Revision Demo #1

為臣之道，從道不從君，非事一身一姓，而安天下社稷宗廟也。

(Original Draft) The art of a minister is serving the people wholeheartedly instead of the ruler.

(Revision Demo#1) The way of being a minister is to serve the country in the best interests of the people, rather than the ruler. Namely, a minister's role should be devoted to providing stability and success for the whole nation, rather than that for the ruler and his royal family.

《尚書·秦誓上》曰：「天佑下民，作之君，作之師，惟其克相上帝，寵綏四方」。存心於天下，方得天命，始為君；以天下為私，淫逸享樂，國速亡。

(Original Draft) The Ancient Chinese Book said: 'Heaven, for the help of the inferior people, made for them rulers, and made for them instructors, that they

might be able to be aiding to God, and secure the stability of the Four Quarters (of the kingdom). In regard to who are criminals and who are not, how dare I give any allowance to my own wishes? '(quotation) Only a man who is both wise and caring about people can be a ruler. Thus it is that Heaven, in the production of things, is sure to be bountiful to the ruler, according to their qualities. If the ruler monopolizes the wealth and profits for himself, his country will demise quickly.

《尚書·秦誓上》曰：「天佑下民，作之君，作之師，惟其克相上帝，寵綏四方」。存心於天下，方得天命，始為君；以天下為私，淫逸享樂，國速亡。

(Revision Demo#1)

“Qin Shi Shang” of *Shang Shu* says: “God, in order to help the people, provided them with rulers and teachers to assist God in loving and appeasing

people in the kingdom. Hence, those who have the best interests of the people in mind will receive appointment from God to be the rulers. Those who exploit the people for their selfish interests and personal indulgences will have their countries decayed very quickly.

古往今來，帝王甚眾，有以天下為重者，亦有因私廢公者，臣當如何行事以利萬民？予略解焉。

(Original Draft) From ancient to modern times, there are many rulers. Some cared for the people, others did not. In this case, what should ministers do to improve people's lives? This will be discussed in the following essay.

(Revision Demo#1)

There were so many emperors in the past. Some may have served their kingdom with the best interests of the people in mind, and some may have pursued their selfish interests at the expense of sacrificing the people. As a minister working for the emperors, how can one serve for the best welfare of the people? This will be briefly discussed below.

《金剛經》中「即非、
是名」所顯示之中道智慧

(Original Draft)

The Wisdom of the Middle Way embodied in
“Be not so, but be” in *The Diamond Sūtra*
(Sanskrit: *Vajracchedikā-Prajñā-Pāramitā Sūtra*)

(Revision Demo#1)

**The Wisdom of the Middle Way revealed in the text of
“Be not such, but be named as such” in *The Diamond Sūtra*
(《金剛經》 *Vajracchedikā-Prajñā-Pāramitā Sūtra*)**

《金剛經》中，「即非、是名」的句式，貫穿於整部經，有其特殊用意。凡是講「即非」，或「則非」，或「非」，皆是從理性而言，體性空寂，離虛妄相；凡是講「是名」，皆是從事相而言，緣生暫有，剎那生滅。世尊苦口婆心，反復言「即非、是名」，由淺入深，層層覷破假有幻相，用意唯在揭示諸法實相，教人破除堅固執著，不住空有兩邊。此中道之表述，正彰般若之妙旨。

(Revision Demo#2) In the Diamond Sutra, the statement of “Be not such..., but be named as such...” that can be seen repeatedly throughout the Sutra, has the underlined significance. The statement of “be not such...” is referred to from the perspective of the true nature of all phenomena. Such nature is empty, tranquil and clear of all illusions. The statement of “but be named as such...” is referred to from the perspective of the “forming” of all phenomena. It manifests that all phenomena arise as the right conditions emerge, but they disappear instantaneously as the right conditions go away. Shakyamuni Buddha repeatedly and patiently stated “be not such, but be named as such” throughout the Sutra, which is meant to explain the truth of our life starting from the basics and progressing towards the profound level to help us see through the truth and let go of our illusions. Shakyamuni Buddha essentially taught people to let go of their attachments to both the “form”, and the “empty nature” of all the phenomena in order for people to attain the wisdom of the middle way. Such wisdom signifies the superb merits of *Prajñā*.

(Original Draft) In the *Diamond Sūtra* (《金剛經》 *Vajracchedikā-Prajñā-Pāramitā Sūtra*), the sentence structure of “be not so, but be” which can be seen throughout the Sūtra has its special significance. The word “be not so” refers to the true nature. The true nature, empty and tranquil, is free of all illusion. The word “but be”, referring to the aspect of form, indicates all phenomena rise at the meeting of conditions, born and destroyed in an instant. The Tathagata continuously emphasizes “be not so, but be” from the elementary to the profound, aiming at discovering true reality of all Dharma and breaking off all illusion. The Tathagata earnestly and patiently teaches people to break down stubborn attachments, abide by neither existence nor non-existence. Such statement of the Middle Way actually represents the key of *Prajñā*.

修學佛法的關鍵在於口訣的運用。《金剛經》中的「即非、是名」，是打開中道般若之門的口訣。學人若能將此中道智慧於日常生活、修行之中深切體認、嚴密觀照，不僅能令修行功夫得力，身心安和調適，亦能使境隨心轉，令當下生活自在清涼，活出快樂智慧的人生。

(Revision Demo#2)

The key principle of practicing the Dharma teachings in Buddhism is to be able to apply its concept in the daily life. Namely, observing in the daily life the statement “be not such, but be named as such” which is repeatedly cited in the Diamond Sutra, is the key to open the door of *Prajñā* (般若 True Wisdom).

Specifically, people need to reflect on such concept in dealing with all people and matters, observe its key principle and let go of all the attachments. This will not only help people advance their cultivation but will also help them achieve peace and joy physically as well as spiritually. Moreover, it will help people change the conditions of the environment that they live in as they change their state of mind. As a result, people will be able to live a life free of worries and attachments. Instead, they will live a life fulfilled with happiness and wisdom.

(Original Draft) The key point of cultivating Buddhism lies in exerting pithy formula. The words “be not so, but be” in the *the Diamond Sūtra* is the key to the door of *Prajñā*. One should contemplate and apply it in self-cultivation during daily life. Thus one’s self-cultivation will be promoted and have one’s body and mind peaceful and harmonious. Moreover, one is able to make the environment change according to one’s mind and lead a life of happiness and wisdom.

世出世間一切法不外乎境、行、果三類。境（境界，包括五蘊、六根、六塵等）；行（修行，如三福、三學、六度、普賢十願等）；果（果位，如聲聞、緣覺、菩薩、佛）。本文從境、行、果三方面，列舉「即非、是名」之經文，逐一分析，不揣淺陋，略窺《金剛經》所示中道智慧之一二。

(Revision Demo#2)

All Dharma including the worldly and beyond can be classified into three categories, such as “circumstances”, “cultivation”, and “attainment”. The circumstances are referred to as the “five occurrences”, the “six sense organs (eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind), and the “six dusts” (form, sound, smell, taste, touch, and phenomenon). The cultivation is referred to as “practicing the Dharma teachings of the Buddha, in the “Three Merits”, “Three Levels of Learning”, “Six Paramitas of Bodhisattvas”, and “Ten Great Vows of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva”.

The “attainment” is referred to as the four distinct levels of enlightenment such as Srāvakas, Pratyekabuddhas, and Bodhisattvas, and Buddha.

This essay is intended to elaborate the essence of the statement “not be such...but be named such...” from the three perspectives of “circumstances”, “cultivation” and “attainment”. It provides analysis and commentary to give readers a glimpse of the wisdom revealed by the Diamond Sutra.

(Original Draft) All dharmas worldly and beyond can be classified as the objective world, cultivation and attainment. The objective world includes five aggregates, six sense organs (eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind), and the six dusts (form, sound, smell, taste, texture, and mind object). Cultivation means to practise the methods of the Three Conditions, the Six Principles of Harmony, the Threefold Learning and the Six Paramitas of bodhisattvas, and the Ten Great Vows of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva. Attainment comprises śrāvakas, pratyekabuddhas and bodhisattvas, and buddhas. This essay lists several sentences of “be not so, but be” in the Sūtra, analyses them in order to discover the wisdom of the Middle Way.

Conclusion :

Key Principles of English Translation

- ✓ **Accuracy, Clarity and Spirit of Original Work**
- ✓ **Simplicity Is Beauty, and Less Is More**
- ✓ **Relentless Reading and Learning Lead to Better Translation**



英國漢學院