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Four Faces, Eight Places: Elaborate Expression, Emergent Meaning, and Translation as Discourse Art

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Abstract

This paper lights a torch at the dual flame of Paul Ricoeur's interaction theory of meaning and Northrop Frye's centripetal theory of meaning to shed light on the little discussed implications of "four-syllable elaborate expressions"—polyfunctional poetic phrases that frequently surface both in Chinese discourse and in various translations of the Chinese Bible.[1] The term "emergent text-level meaning" (Walrod 2007) describes the gestalt semantics of a given text which, much like consciousness, cannot be reduced to the sum of its conventionally defined parts. Four-syllable elaborate expressions are common in the languages of East and Southeast Asia and involve aesthetically pleasing, often ancient, combinations of monosyllabic morpheme pairs that constitute microcosmic texts in themselves. For example, 四面八方 'four faces, eight places' is the Dangdai Yiben (Chinese Living Version) rendering of the Job 37:3 phrase, כַּנְפוֹת הָאָרֶץ or 'the wings of the earth', usually translated, "the ends of the earth" in English. Applying insights from the metaphor-oriented hermeneutics of Ricoeur (1981) and Frye (2006), we argue that four-syllable elaborate expressions illustrate some of the ways in which "metaphor" and "text" function interdependently. The meaning that emerges from this interaction of microcosm and macrocosm is itself dependent on an often overlooked factor: the successful integration of a poetic imagination conversant with the dynamics of language and thought in a given socio-geographical context—in this case, East Asia. Our conclusions have implications for philosophy of language and translation theory alike.

1. Introduction

Meaning matters. The meaning of meaning matters. Consider the Chinese phrase "ten thousand meaningful matters" for instance, a rather wooden translation of 万事如意 *wàn shì rú yì*. Pragmatically speaking, we are dealing with an emotionally warm four-syllable utterance commonly used in formal leave-taking or for signing off in a piece of Chinese correspondence. We might approximate it with "all the best," or "best wishes" in English, but either of these two "meaning-based" translations would be missing something profound: the terse, complex interplay of sound, rhythm, symbol, polysemy, parallelism and cultural categories suggested by the original. In this paper we seek to blend insights from two hermeneutic philosophers, Paul Ricoeur and Northrop Frye, to argue that the compositional semantics of phrases and clauses, along with the discourse semantics of sentences and texts, are interdependent and emergent. This

[1] This article is a revised version of a paper presented at BT2009, Graduate Institute of Applied Linguistics, Dallas, Texas, October 16–20, 2009.

argument will be facilitated by a discussion of the translation and interpretation of Chinese four-syllable elaborate expressions.

Whatever else translation may entail, the successful "transfer" or "transposition" of meaning must be its essence—its purpose and its goal. Semantics, whether lexically, compositionally, or textually conceived, is at the heart of the enterprise, and our assumptions and philosophical presuppositions regarding meaning will influence our translation choices. This paper advocates an integrational approach (Harris 1998, Toolan 1996, Walrod 2006a, 2007). In much the same way that juxtaposed sentences form a text whose gestalt meaning, once interpreted, cannot be reduced to the sum of its conventionally defined "parts," the act of interpreting juxtaposed phonemes, morphemes, words and phrases gives birth to the irreducible complexity we commonly refer to as "meaning."

The phenomenological nature of meaning is not transparent, and in-spite of popular folk-assumptions and pervasive scholarly presuppositions promoting "objective" approaches to meaning, incompatible semantic theories abound from diverse schools of thought: theories that range from the elaborate to the simpleminded. At the simpleminded end of the spectrum, many still assume meaning transfer to be a straightforward, if arcane, matter of encoding and decoding fixed forms through processes of socio-cognitive "telementation" (see discussion in Toolan 1996:131, Harris 1981:114 and elsewhere). Somewhat more rigorous schools of thought seek to upgrade this view by arguing that meaning is tied up in literal propositions *à la* Wittgenstein (1961), propositions that correspond to empirical facts. At the more formal end of the spectrum, theorists cite internalist semantics and argue that the symbolic logic of predicate calculus, and/or the bedrock of semantic primes, is required to elucidate the underlying logical structure of meaning (Davidson 1967, Jackendoff 1990, Wierzbicka 2001). The closest thing to consensus we have in our traditions of Anglo-American thinking on the nature of meaning is the pervasive (and erroneous) belief that meaning is an unspecified entity that can be packaged into words as a fixed code and shipped off through conceptual conduits with negligible loss in both communication and translation (see critical reviews in Reddy 1979 and Walrod 2006a). We recognize that many theories built on such assumptions have proven useful for activities ranging from artificial intelligence to textual exegesis. They have, nevertheless, overlooked essential qualities of linguistic meaning and communication; as such, the following discussion calls these assumptions into question.

The paper moves from a discussion of the nature and translation of four-syllable elaborate expressions in East and Southeast Asia to a discussion of their appearance in translation contexts—translations of the Chinese Bible, in particular. These examples are then examined in light of the metaphor-oriented hermeneutics of Northrop Frye and Paul Ricoeur. Frye's (2006) centripetal theory of meaning and Ricoeur's (1981) interaction theory of meaning are brought into dialogue with each other and applied not only to four-syllable elaborate expression but also to the nature of linguistic meaning in general. The implications are discussed in terms of aesthetics, semantic emergence and Walrod's (2007) "emergent text-level meaning."

2. Four-syllable Elaborate Expression in East and Southeast Asia

The term "elaborate expression" was first coined by Thai language scholar Mary Haas (1964). The term is an attempt to describe the distinctive nature of terse, polyfunctional poetic utterances commonly found in the highly isolative languages of East and Southeast Asia. These expressions are usually uttered in four-syllable sets: four monosyllabic morphemes functioning together with parallel symmetry in terms of morpheme semantics, syntactic relations and/or syllable phonology. Some examples from areal languages will provide a feel for their simplicity and complexity: A Lahu epithet for paddy rice that has been left bundled in the fields too long after harvesting is *fâʔ-ɔ̄-ŋâʔ-ɔ̄* or 'rodent-rice-bird-rice' (Matisoff 1991:83–84), "rice left for the birds and rats." A Thai expression for sincerity is *náam-sǎy-cay-cing* or 'water-clear-heart-true' (Goddard 2005:214), "a heart as true as water is clear." A Tai Lue saying used of someone who has had a good upbringing is *pho-sǎŋ-me-sɔ́n* or 'father-command-mother-teach' (Prasithrathsint 2008), "instructed well by parents." A Kayah Li phrase used in reference to a complicated country is *thɑ̄-sú-kè-sá* (Solnit 1997:272), in which two compounds actually interrupt each other, embodying the disjointed nature

of their referent in the process. Solnit glosses this phrase 'water+com+land+plicated' in an attempt to capture the jumbled reanalysis of the Kayah Li compounds *thɔ̄kè* 'country' and *súsá* 'complicated'.

In Chinese linguistics such elaborate expressions are known as 成语 *chéngyǔ* or 'fixed expressions'. Chengyu are usually packed dense with meaning and are, from an etic perspective, perplexingly indecipherable. One must often soak in various pools of historical or cultural context before being able to absorb an elaborate expression—making adequate translation a challenge of its own. These sayings are also difficult, or impossible, to classify using European linguistic and rhetorical categories. Although some are well known and frequently used, even these may not be treated as unanalyzable, fused "entries" or "dead metaphors" in the "mental lexicon": they have been called "idioms" but are much more systematic in their poetic constraints and parallel structures than our familiar idioms and are usually more condensed conceptually, evoking overlapping cultural scripts and frames or even folklore and cosmology. They might also be compared to such rhetorical devices as hendiadys, e.g., "sound and fury," "fear and trembling" or hendiatris, e.g., "eat, drink and be merry," "healthy, wealthy and wise," devices that combine diverse expressions into a single semantic field in order to achieve an intensifying effect. Ultimately, though, this comparison breaks down. Hendiadys and hendiatris are lists of words from a common speech class overtly linked using a conjunction. Elaborate expressions, on the other hand, tend to be polyfunctional both in terms of composition and use in discourse contexts.

The parallel elements of an elaborate expression may involve repetition, alliteration, speech-class contrast, chiastic pairing, rhyme pairing, any combination of these features, and more. Elaborate expressions are often used descriptively, but even in such cases cannot simply be classified as lexicalized adjective phrases. The Chinese phrase 有山有水 *yǒu shān yǒu shuǐ* 'have-mountain-have-water', for instance, may function as an adjective phrase in a clause or as an autonomous utterance, making a statement about the picturesque or sublime scenery of some desirable location—a place in which mountains and water co-exist to weave a beautiful natural tapestry.

Elaborate expressions are by no means reserved for exquisite and refined sentiments, however, and may also share functions more analogous to verbs or nouns than adjectives. The expression 上吐下泻 *shàng tù xià xiè* 'up-vomit-down-torrent', for instance, is reserved for those who experience simultaneous symptoms of vomiting and diarrhea: "It's coming out both ends," an English speaker might say, albeit less euphoniously. The following four sections provide a brief overview of some other iconic features and classes of four-syllable elaborate expression.

2.1. Values, belief and illocution in elaborate expression

Elaborate expressions are, first of all, inseparable from the Chinese worldview, and students of Chinese cannot advance without becoming more and more proficient in their use of these expressions. Pervasive cultural values and beliefs are frequently framed in four fitly chosen syllables, and the leadership of China has long known that a successful paradigm shift within the culture must take this poetic institution seriously. In the implementation of the embattled one-child policy, for example, Chinese leaders recognized that that they were up against a deeply ingrained belief that was best represented by the following statement: 多子多福 *duō zǐ duō fú*, 'more-children-more blessing'. In other words, the traditional belief in China has been, "The more children you have the more blessed your life will be."

This elaborate expression was demonized by those implementing the one child policy under the critique that it was a "feudalistic" ideal. Simply to decry the original sentiment would be far from adequate, however. A new, equally euphonious, elaborate expression must be coined that would be equally condensed and equally hopeful, to take the place of the traditional slogan. The alternative elaborate expression came to be 少生优生 *shǎo shēng yōu shēng*, 'less-life-superior-life'. In other words, "the fewer births there are, the better the quality of life will be." The elaborate expression was picked up as a slogan and can still be found painted on buildings in Mainland China as propaganda in support of the one child policy.

2.2. Parable-based elaborate expression

Many Chinese elaborate expressions are impossible to grasp without first knowing at least an outline of the specific folktale from which they emerge. In fact, whole dictionaries are devoted to the exposition of such expressions in China.

The expression 画蛇添足 *huà shé tiān zú*, 'draw-snake-add-foot', for instance, emerges from a cautionary folktale in which a snake-drawing art contest for a jug of fine whiskey is lost by the most talented artist simply due to the fact that, while waiting for his companions to finish their inferior snake drawings, he grows bored and paints feet on his own sketch—thereby disqualifying it from the contest (since his picture is no longer a snake). The cautionary quip, then, evokes a humorous narrative to express a subtle, but specific, warning to perfectionist creative types who may be tempted to introduce complexity into what is already whole, or to overdo something by adding an irrelevant component. Thus, we see that four Chinese morphemes fitly chosen may entail a tremendous lode of semantic detail.

Another of the countless examples in this class is 守株待兔 *shǒu zhū dài tù*, 'guard-root-await-rabbit', in which 'root' is a metonymic reference to a tree. The story evoked in the imagination of an educated Chinese person upon hearing this expression is one in which a farmer ceases to work after witnessing a rabbit run straight into a tree trunk and fall unconscious, thereby providing him with dinner. Instead of working, the farmer opts to sit on the tree's roots waiting for another rabbit to do the same, since waiting around is so much more relaxing. Simply by prefacing the expression with the PROHIBITIVE 别 *bíe*, the parable and its condensed statement are used as a good-humored warning to overly optimistic, opportunistic loafers: i.e., 别守株待兔 *bíe shǒu zhū dài tù*.

Clearly, in both of these examples, we are faced with text-sized macrocosm contracted to the span of four-syllable microcosms. How should such expressions be translated? Taking the rabbit-and-farmer expression *shǒu zhū dài tù*, for instance, one possibility for unpacking semantic content would be the following, "Don't rest on the root of a tree with a watchful eye, waiting for a rabbit to happen by so that it might accidentally run into the tree trunk and knock itself out cold—thereby simultaneously providing you with a free dinner and relieving you from the need to work—thinking all the while, 'Who knows? It happened once; it could happen again'—and thereby heaping scorn on your own head due to your inane penchant for lazily trusting in chance." Such an attempt to fully unpack the semantic detail of an elaborate expression might seem overdone, but a dynamic equivalent like "Don't lazily trust in chance" or "Don't put all your eggs in one basket" might seem underdone to an inverse degree.

Expressions in this class are usually reserved for highly specific situations and are intended to be used with economy and care since their proper use reflects a certain level of refinement in the language of a given speaker.

2.3. Reduplication in elaborate expressions

A more commonly used class of Chinese elaborate expression involves reduplication of contrasted elements as a form of rhetorical underlining. The phrase 马马虎虎 *mǎ mǎ hū hū*, 'horse-horse-tiger-tiger', for instance is used with the emotion of a sigh to express a mediocre sentiment, similar to "so-so" or "fair to middling" in English. In Chinese, however, a clear reference is being made to a cultural meta-narrative—the Chinese animal zodiac schema, in which tigers and horses are a congenial pairing.

Another commonly used reduplication is 密密麻麻 *mì mì má má*, 'close-close-hemp-hemp', a phrase used to describe any situation in which people or objects appear smaller than life and are clustered closely together (like the weave of hemp cloth). The starry sky on a moonless night might be referred to in this way, as might a large congregation of people viewed from above.

One way of saying "everyone" in Chinese is 男男女女 *nán nán nǚ nǚ* 'man-man-woman-woman' and one way of saying "almost" is 七七八八 *qī qī bā bā*, 'seven-seven-eight-eight' with the concordant sense that one is moving closer and closer to completion with nine (or ten), even as the words roll off the speaker's tongue. Reduplicated expressions abound, as do number-based elaborate expressions in general.

2.4. Number-based elaborate expressions

Number-based elaborate expressions are usually used to express what might be glossed as adverbials, discourse markers and any "number" of abstract relationships ranging from epistemic modality and resultative semantics, to the observation of ruptured chaos and the description of comprehensive scope, as the following examples illustrate.

十有八九 *shí yǒu bā jiǔ* is glossed 'ten-have-eight-nine' and may be interpreted "in all likelihood" or "it stands to reason that"—thus functioning as an evidential of sorts. The expression has the added benefit, however, of implying that the likelihood under discussion may be inferred logically from quantitative evidence at hand—since ten is logically composed of eight and nine—a more complex cocktail of meaning than any familiar English phrase of similar length and euphony.

九九归一 *jiǔ jiǔ guī yī* is glossed 'nine-nine-return-one' and might be interpreted, "in the final analysis" or "after all's been said and done"—thus functioning as a discourse marker with resultative semantics. The Chinese expression, however, evokes the image of having reached a quantitative threshold, i.e., the number 99 (a number that frequently appears in Chinese expressions and has strong appeal to the folk imagination), after which, the person counting must advance to a new stage or return to where she started in hopes of assessing her progress. An analogous lexicalized adverbial phrase in English is the adverbial "at the end of the day," used as a summary discourse marker.

乱七八糟 *luàn qī bā zāo*, or 'chaotic-seven-eight-spoiled' is generally used contemptuously of a state of affairs or a physical location that is in a hideous mess. In this case, a similar English phrase surfaces, "at sixes and sevens." In contrast, the Chinese phrase involves an awkward chiastic parallelism that cuts against the grain of ordinary number-based elaborate expressions. Note that the two numeral elements are less euphoniously jammed together in the middle of the phrase, thereby contributing to the chaotic feeling of the expression.

四面八方 *sì miàn bā fāng*, or 'four-faces-eight-places' is the elaborate expression functioning as our paper's namesake. It may be interpreted using the English adverbial "everywhere," but once again, its mixture of quantity and quality supersedes its English "equivalent" both in terms of metonymic imagery, specific reference, and euphonious sensation. The Chinese expression encourages us to visualize the outermost reaches of everywhere, by exegeting its multiplied senses spatially with numbers and images. We are implicitly invited to imagine the four cardinal directions as surfaces or faces that proceed in all four directions from any given center. We are then reminded to critique our assumption that this is the sum total of space. Within the four directions (faces) lie many more individual locations, within the horizontal plane lies the equally distant vertical plane and beyond the horizon of the four directions lie extreme distances far greater than our imagination is capable of comprehending. How much space can you imagine? Double that. How many places can you imagine in that space? Double that.

3. Elaborate Expression in Chinese Target-Language Translation

Whatever challenges may confront the adequate rendering of elaborate expressions in Chinese source-language translation, such expressions are frequently employed to enhance naturalness and clarity in Chinese target-language translation—not least in Chinese translations of the Bible. The traditional Union Version (CUV 1919) 和合本, hereafter CUV, tends to use such expressions sparingly, but four-syllable elaborate expressions feature more prominently in contemporary translations such as the New Chinese Version (NCV 1992) 新译本, hereafter NCV, and the Chinese Living Bible (CLB 1983) 当代圣经, hereafter CLB. The following discussion draws examples from the CLB unless otherwise noted.

As might be expected, overtly poetic passages, such as Mary's Magnificat of Luke 1:46–55, often feature elaborate expressions in Chinese target language translation. Note the following two elaborate expressions employed in translating this passage:

Luke 1:48 *πᾶσαι αἱ γενεαί*, 'all generations':

世世代代 *shì shì dài dài*, 'era-era-generation-generation'

Luke 1:51 *ὑπερηφάνους διανοίᾳ καρδίας*, 'proud in the thoughts of their hearts':

心骄气傲 *xīn jiāo qì 'ào*, 'heart-haughty-air-proud'

Reduplication is used in the first example to enable a unified rendering of plurality and totality through time and space with a euphonious AABB parallel structure thrown in for good measure. In the second example, the ABAB structure is semantic in nature, with the A-elements each representing a physical property or organ that is used metaphorically for an emotional/psychological state, and the B-elements each representing near-synonyms for toxic pride. The effect is vivid in both cases, and in both cases the elaborate expressions are used frequently, if not daily, in Chinese discourse.

The use of elaborate expression is no more restricted to poetic passages in translation than it is restricted to ornate speech in daily conversation. An elaborate expression might show up anywhere. In John 13:22, for example, when Jesus' disciples stare at each other, at a loss to know which of them he was indicting, NCV and CLB render the predicate 面面相觑 *miàn miàn xiāng qù* or 'face-face-mutual-look.at' which is commonly interpreted, "to look at each other in dismay" (MDGB 2009).

In Matthew 6:26, when Jesus reminds us that birds do not store food in barns, the verb phrase is translated with an ancient elaborate expression: 积谷防饥 *jī gǔ fáng jī* 'accumulate-grain-prevent-famine'. A similar phrase in English would be, "amass a stockpile of grain to protect against (the threat of) famine." The Chinese phrase, however, is not only more economical and venerable (words fit for a wise rabbi) but is also more euphonious, involving two interlacing patterns of symmetry: ABAB, in terms of syntactic verb-object alternation and ABCA, in terms of phonological homophony.

In addition to complex predicates, elaborate expressions are also employed to express single modifiers in Chinese target language translation. In Ephesians 1:1, for example, when Paul addresses the faithful saints in Ephesus, the modifier is rendered 忠心不渝 *zhōngxīn bùyú* 'loyal-heart-not-change'. A similar elaborate expression is used in Matthew 11:29 to describe the one who is gentle and humble in heart: 柔和谦卑 *róuhé qiānbēi*, 'soft-peaceful-humble-low'. In both cases, the two pairs that make up each expression are lexicalized compounds in closely analogous semantic fields brought together into an elaborate expression to serve an intensifying effect. In the case of "faithful," the first compound, 忠心 *zhōngxīn* may be rendered "devoted" as a compound and 不渝 *bùyú* may be rendered "constant."

An even stronger intensifying effect is achieved in Chinese discourse and translation contexts by combining two elaborate expressions in syntax. In fact, one verse earlier in Matthew 11:28, the compound modifier, weary and heavy-laden, is rendered by juxtaposing two elaborate expressions: 奔波劳碌、心灵沉重 *bēnbō láolù, xīnlíng chénzhòng*; 'rushing-waves-labor-rough, heart-spirit-sink-heavy'. Once again, lexicalized compound pairs are grouped with other lexicalized compound pairs. The interaction of the two sets of four morphemes (themselves composed of two compounds each) evokes images not only of incessantly rushing rough waves and a heavy hearted laborer but also of the laborer sinking beneath the waves due to the heaviness of his spirit. The felt sense that emerges serves a vivid, visceral intensifying effect.

In Luke 2:9, a similar juxtaposition of two sets of four serves not only as an intensifying rhetorical device, but also as a discourse-level pivot. The glory of the Lord shone around the shepherds; here the expression is rendered using a syntactic juxtaposition of two elaborate expressions—resulting in an intensified expression that serves to mark narrative peak: 荣光闪烁，照耀四方 *róngguāng shǎnshuò, zhàoyào sìfāng*; 'glory-light-flash-sparkle, shine-dazzle-four-place'. The two sets of four morphemes are organized into four sets of two compounds that report the brilliance of the event with a pulsating rhythm and a chiastic AB-BA macro-pattern of semantic arguments (A) and semantic predicates (B). The effect is overwhelming, and the blinding light dispels the darkness into all four directions at once.

Thinking of space in terms of quantities of four is familiar territory from our earlier discussion of 四面八方 *sì miàn bā fāng*, or 'four-faces-eight-places', a traditional elaborate expression from the days of Confucius used in Job 37:3 to translate the Hebrew phrase כַּנְפוֹת הָאָרֶץ *kanəfwōṯ hā'āreṣ* or "the ends of the earth." Notably, in Hebrew we are also dealing with a traditional metaphorical mapping in which the wingtips of a bird are called to mind as an aid for imagining the extremities of space. For the sake of analogous flavor, we might well render the Hebrew phrase, "the wings of the earth" or "the wing-tips of the earth." The Job

37 passage is alive with sound and light, dancing with danger and distances as Elihu describes the rumbling thunder of the voice of God that follows the lightning bolts he sends forth to the ends of the earth—the wingtips of the earth—the four faces and eight places of the earth.

But how does the translator move from the qualitative wingtips of a cosmic bird to the quantitative doubling of space from four to eight? Does she add up the component parts of the former to deduce its sum so that it may be converted into the new currency of the latter? Does she analytically reduce the first phrase to its underlying composite propositional forms and map those forms onto target language content? Does she compute the underlying predicate calculus of one form into the other using recursive primes and operators? What do these phrases mean? What is the nature of the meaning they share in common? And what of the texts and contexts in which these phrases function? The hermeneutic insights of Northrop Frye and Paul Ricoeur may prove helpful here.

4. Frye's Centripetal Hermeneutic Applied

Canadian literary critic and hermeneutic philosopher Northrop Frye argues that poetry underlies all thought processes (1957:83) and that poetry is a more simple, more natural and more direct form of expression than prose (2002:51). We should note that Frye is not alone in his views; but, while his position leaves him in good company, his ideas are by no means mainstream. Anglo-American presuppositions on the nature and place of poetic language seem to be at odds with such views. In lieu of our ability here to exegete Frye's system of thought in depth, we wish to draw attention to one of his most simple and profound observations in hopes of clarifying both his unconventional perspective and our current discussion on the nature of meaning in translation, with illustrative reference to four syllable elaborate expression.

4.1. Centripetal semantics and the poetry of prose

Frye's life and work were thickly enmeshed with language, literature, the history of human thought and a long love affair with the Bible. In one of his classic works, *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature* (Frye 2006), Frye sought to validate William Blake's appreciation of the Judeo-Christian scriptures as the interpretive key to all art. Frye's hermeneutic approach in the work, and elsewhere, is overtly oriented toward metaphor. In chapter three, one of two devoted solely to a discussion of metaphor in the Bible, Frye argues that metaphor does not serve as "…an incidental ornament of Biblical language, but one of its controlling modes of thought" (2006:72). In the Bible, as in all language contexts, we frequently encounter explicit metaphors, such as "I am the vine, you are the branches" or "You have made my days a mere handbreadth" or "That was a loaded statement" or "Pamela is quite the wallflower." Frye argues, however, that implicit metaphor is much more common—pervasive even—being found wherever words are placed together. Frye refers to implicit metaphor as "centripetal meaning" and makes a remarkable claim (2006:77):

All language is permeated by metaphor simply because words are juxtaposed.

We must not miss this point. The centripetal force of interpretation requires us to appreciate the metaphor soaked nature of all language, whether poetic or mundane. Centripetal meaning emerges from the successful interpretation of juxtaposed linguistic units in a text or utterance—the poetic act of considering words, phrases, clauses, discourse units and discourse markers in terms of each other. In the lingering shadow of the analytic tradition, we are trained to consider words in isolation and are taught to assume that their segregated meanings are fixed or transparent, their combination analytic or recursive, but when a given word or phrase is juxtaposed with other words and phrases, each is necessarily interpreted in terms of its neighbors—both microcosmically at phrase and clause levels and macrocosmically at the levels of syntax, discourse unit, discourse marker, text and thematic context.

To say, "shovel," for instance (and to tag the utterance with prototypical, or even "objective" lexical-entry definitions influenced by collective experience and social habit, including speech-class labels and embedded polysemic variations), is something very different from saying "sand shovel," "manure shovel" and "snow shovel"—all of which are different still from saying "shovel snow," "shovel manure" or "shovel sand." The morphosyntactic constraints on interpretation are transparent simply by reference to automated

convention (i.e., word order). What we cannot account for in terms of brute calculation, however, is the emergent semantics of any of the six examples. In each case we are dealing with a complex unity resulting from two concepts being considered in terms of each other. To think of "shovel" in terms of "sand," regardless of word order, changes the physical shape and material composition of the tool imagined along with the weight, quantity and location of the manipulated material in our imagination immediately and without effort. To think of the shovel in terms of manure changes the motions with which we imagine the tool being wielded, the depth and material of the spade, the length and shape of the handle. Remarkably different physical sensations are spontaneously evoked between the three sets as well such as smells, textures, colors, kinesthetic qualities, sounds and emotional reactions. Beyond all of this, each combination inevitably conjures up a distinct array of associated cultural frames and scripts. Such is the nature of speech at even the most elementary phrase level. Whether we are linguists, translators or laypeople, we ignore it to our detriment.

We may also imagine a related communicative context in which someone is heaping effusive praise on their superior in the workplace. Another observer might whisper an aside, "He's really shoveling it on thick and heavy." None of us would look for a physical shovel to verify our understanding of the utterance or validate its accuracy.

Frye recognizes such interpretive behavior as fundamentally poetic and argues that such processes of interpretation occur whenever we achieve understanding of a linguistic event, however full or limited our understanding may be. Frye contrasts this "centripetal" mode of meaning making with "centrifugal" meaning making and argues that both occur in every mode of interpretation (or translation), though some texts may tend to draw attention to one mode of interpretation over the other. For Frye, centrifugal meaning relates words and predictable word combinations to their more conventional definitions and to the socio-historical context in which (or out of which) they are to be interpreted. In order for language to be meaningful, in order for it to make sense, we must also consider the associations linguistic units reference outside a given text. Thus, each successful interpretive event involves at least these two movements of thought, and both forms of meaning emerge in tandem as we interpret a given text.

4.2. Microcosm and macrocosm in centripetal semantics

Returning, then, to cosmic wing spans, eight from four, Elihu and electric storms, we would do well to note that elaborate expressions function in much the same way that "ordinary language" functions. Elaborate expressions simply present us with condensed microcosms of meaning that emphasize centripetal interpretation over centrifugal interpretation. Even so, imagining the extremities of space in terms of four times two or the wing-span of a cosmic bird is just as remarkable and poetic as imagining the potentialities of snow in terms of a shovel or the act of shoveling in terms of flattery. In all four cases, the two sets being compared are altered into a complex unity that cannot be predicted or described merely as a tautological sum of recursive or atomic parts.

When Chinese translators selected 四面八方 *sì miàn bā fāng* 'four-faces-eight-places' to translate הָאָרֶץ כַּנְפוֹת *kanəfwōṯ hā'āreṣ* 'the wings of the earth' we may assume that they acted on the same poetic intuitions we all use daily when engaged in common acts of linguistic interpretation. They must have read the passage, and with centrifugal context in mind, they must have also noted the emotion and danger of the scene and imagined the spaces involved. They would have hosted images of lightning all around them, near and far with white slithering whips leaping out into the extreme distances—all directly involved with a shocking, thunderous, personal voice. The centripetal effect must have justified a poetically analogous expression from a stock of available phrases—a fundamentally qualitative act that would have been facilitated by the imagination and emotions and certainly not hampered by them.

We should point out that a successful interpretation of the four morphemes in the elaborate expression emerges in a way that is directly analogous to an interpretation of the broader passage that led to its selection in the translation context. Microcosm mirrors macrocosm and the two are interdependent. We understand the meaning of 'four-faces-eight-places' by centrifugal reference outside the expression to Chinese socio-historical context and also, simultaneously, by the poetic act of considering its morpheme combinations in terms of each other. In both cases our expectations are surpassed and revised. In the end

our interpretive investment is doubled. In the end, when it comes to meaning, if we put in four, we get back eight.

5. Ricoeur's Interaction Hermeneutic Applied

The French hermeneutic phenomenologist philosopher and theologian Paul Ricoeur complements Northrop Frye's vision of meaning stereoscopically. Like Frye, Ricoeur's approach to meaning affirms the fundamentally poetic nature of ordinary language. Ricoeur (1981) suggests that the imagination should be incorporated into linguistic theory as a "dimension of language" since it is none other than the faculty that enables us to experience the emergence of meaning. He also notes that, "The creations of language would be devoid of sense unless they served the general project of letting new worlds emerge by means of poetry" (1981:181). For Ricoeur, as for Frye, poetry is not simply a segregated genre of speech but, rather, a quality that pervades all speech, whenever words interact.

5.1. Microcosm and macrocosm in interaction semantics

Ricoeur courts the age-old distinction between "literal" and "metaphorical" language only to turn the distinction on its head. Since all words are polysemous, what we call "literal" meaning is not the inscribed, fixed, proper or primitive meaning of a word but, "…rather, literal meaning is the totality of the semantic field, the set of possible contextual uses which constitutes the polysemy of a word" (1981:169). How do words gain the polysemous "literal" meanings they seem to be associated with in isolation? Only through metaphorical interaction with each other—the interaction that occurs when they are strung together through time and space in ordinary language contexts. Only through "…a contextual action which places the semantic fields of several words in interaction" (1981:169). Only through the poetry of text and context. The so-called dictionary definitions of words are arrived at by (linguistic) historians and etymologists, who examine many previous usages of terms in previous contexts, and work to distill all the semantic components they can identify in order to write a definition. But this exercise is much like creating distinctive feature matrices in phonology. One needs only to identify those central features of phonemes, or lexemes, to distinguish each from the others. Once that is done, the task succeeds, and there is some value in that. However, especially in the case of lexemes, it leaves unstated an enormous amount of information that is present in the cognitive grids of speakers of the language. This is the kind of information that causes speakers to react against collocational clashes, but more than that, it is the kind of information that provides the speakers' intuitions about what kind of cognitive reaction will be produced when certain units of the mental lexicon are juxtaposed. Those intuitions are far too sophisticated and subtle to be circumscribed by definition. They go far beyond what we could even consciously account for and articulate. They are products of the elaborated neurocognitive relational networks that are distributed across many regions of the cerebral cortex (Lamb 1999, especially chapters 9–12 and 16).

Thus Ricoeur's interaction hermeneutic helps us understand that the emergent, metaphorical nature of meaning not only precedes, but enables, what we have come to think of as "literal" meaning. The interaction hermeneutic is most dramatically realized when the conventional meanings of words come to be interpreted from fresh perspectives due to interacting with other words from which they have previously been isolated. This results in a semantic clash, or what we may call "fresh metaphor" (1981:170). The semantic clash leads to an experience of "logical absurdity" that must be resolved by the imagination in order to facilitate meaning. Or at least, that is how Ricoeur described the process in 1981 and earlier. More recent findings by Ray Gibbs (1994) provide strong evidence that there is no distinct process of interpretation or cognition for speech events that seem far toward the metaphorical extreme of the conventional:metaphorical continuum. Gibbs provides evidence to show that there is no cognitive "double take" when one encounters what appears to be metaphorical. There is no extra time invested in reacting to "logical absurdity" and searching for alternative interpretations. Indeed, Ricoeur appears to be completely in line with Gibbs' findings when he asserts that a single theory will suffice for text and metaphor (in Reagan and Stewart 1978 chapter 10). The construal of meaning is a cognitive process of evaluating all available inputs from text and context, and filtering these through one's cognitive grid, made up of elaborated neurocognitive relational networks (Lamb 1999:381–383). These networks are undergoing

"continuous creation, modification, and augmentation…as new expressions or texts are produced or encountered within communicative events" (Walrod 2006a:76).

Remarkably, this phenomenon provides an adequate description of a process that occurs not only at the "lower" linguistic levels of the phrase, clause and sentence, but also at "higher" levels of the text, context and discourse pragmatics. The imaginative process that occurred the first time you were commanded to "keep it down in there" is a microcosmic example of what happens whenever you come to understand an unfamiliar passage of difficult prose or profit from a speech devoid of clichés.

Four syllable elaborate expressions provide condensed examples of Ricoeur's interaction hermeneutic in themselves. One might argue that these devices are, in fact, usually fixed or lexicalized expressions in Chinese. Nevertheless, each was at one time fresh. Furthermore, elaborate expressions continue to be coined daily, and few Chinese speakers seem to be familiar with more than a slight fraction of the traditional expressions in this rhetorical class.

Thus to hear or read 四面八方 *sì miàn bā fāng* 'four-faces-eight-places' for the first time is not only to think of "four" in terms of "surfaces" (or "faces") and "eight" in terms of "places" (or "locations") due to syntactic juxtaposition, but also to think of "faces" (or "surfaces") in terms of "locations" (or "places") and to think of "four" in terms of "eight" due to semantic parallelism. The imagination is sent in multiple directions at once and is then invited to re-interpret its original assumptions only to discover that an imaginative expanse has been evoked, emanating in all directions, and double the complexity or size of the expanse that might have been implied by the original interpretation. Any two of the four combinations provides us with an analogy for metaphor. Each of the four pairs considered in terms of the other three provides us with an analogy for text. Even more remarkable than the evidence that microcosm mirrors macrocosm in the interpretive process of elaborate expression and ordinary language alike is the evidence that text and metaphor are interdependent. In the words of Ricoeur (1981:180):

> If the interpretation of local metaphors is illuminated by the interpretation of the text as a whole and by the clarification of the kind of world which the work projects, then in turn the interpretation of the [text] as a whole is controlled by the explanation of the metaphor as a local phenomenon of the text.

5.2. Object versus event and the interdependence of metaphor and text

There are times in Ricoeur's writings when he seems to accept the Saussurean distinction between *langue* and *parole*, or that of competence and performance, and recognize these as valid distinctions. Indeed, to enter the dialogue about language and linguistics, and discuss how translation theory is affected, one must acknowledge that the distinction has been made, and evaluate how this has shaped our thinking about language and translation.

Summarizing the Saussurean distinction, Ricoeur states that "Langue is the code—or set of codes—on the basis of which a particular speaker produces parole as a particular message.… [A] message is arbitrary and contingent, while a code is systematic and compulsory for a given speaking community" (Ricoeur 1976:3).

In any discussion of meaning-based translation, the message is in focus. Ironically, for most discussions of linguistics, especially for formal or structural approaches, it is the code that is in focus, since it lends itself to scientific analysis and description. However, as Ricoeur points out, the code has only a virtual existence (notwithstanding Hockett, Chomsky, and Yngve, cf. Duffley 2009). It is only synchronic (like freeze-frame photography), and does not exist in any diachronic event of discourse, or at least is subservient to the events of discourse. Linguists have been willing to "…bracket the message for the sake of the code, the event for the sake of the system, the intention for the sake of the structure, and the arbitrariness of the act for the systematicity of combinations within synchronic systems" (Ricoeur 1976:3). Thus the algebraic formulations of syntactitians and the circumscriptions (definitions) of lexicographers came to be viewed as objects in themselves which were determinative of textual meaning, even apart from context of communication. Notions such as "sentence meaning" were proposed, which ironically could be in opposition to utterance meaning or intended meaning. These developments only served to affirm the long-standing, dubious distinction between literal and metaphorical language.

In hermeneutics, slogans such as "the meaning is in the text" could easily be understood to be consistent

with the "language as object" position. Most of the western approaches to linguistics are also consistent with that position. A few astute authors (e.g., George Steiner 1992) have raised the question of whether translation is theoretically possible in approaches where system and code are elevated (dare we say idolized?) to the position of tangible and durable objects. Since there is rarely, if ever, equivalence at the levels of syntax and lexicon, the more we objectify the "units," and the more we view those objects as immutable and rule governed, the more difficult philosophically translation would be.

However, when language is viewed as event rather than object (Walrod 2006a), this allows us to develop the theory of emergent text-level meaning, to endorse meaning-based translation, and to embrace Ricoeur's assertion that a single theory should suffice for metaphor and text (1981). Metaphor need not be accounted for as an aberrant or exceptionally difficult case to be dealt with, but can be viewed as the standard mode of meaning creation in text or discourse and poetry. It is not only in presumed rare cases of metaphor that meaning emerges or is created, but that is the normal and natural function of discourse, i.e., to create emergent text-level meaning.

In support of this position, note the work of Gibbs (1994), who argues that no special mechanism exists for processing metaphor, and the assertion of Ricoeur that there are no live metaphors in a dictionary. Once they can be circumscribed by definition, they are beyond the moment of metaphorical or textual meaning creation, and have become a part of the cognitive history of the members of the speech community (Walrod 2006a:77).

6. Implications for Philosophy of Language and Translation Theory

It is clear from the discussion above that mechanistic or reductionist views of linguistics cannot deal well with the complexity and creativity of natural language in human communication, which is permeated with metaphorical actions, creating a semantic gestalt or "emergent text-level meaning." As for the interpretive theme of our paper, the microcosms of emergent text-level semantics known as four-syllable elaborate expressions provide a vivid illustration of something both more mundane and more profound than the elaborate expressions themselves: the gestalt semantics of ordinary language. Humans are inveterate sense-makers. Whether we are faced with a relatively fresh passage of prose or arrested by a jolting juxtaposition in colloquial conversation, we dispatch our imaginations to "four faces and eight places" to discover an interpretation that can be made congruent with text and context.

6.1. Translation, Emergent Text-level Meaning and the Poetic Imagination

In section 3 we noted numerous examples of elaborate expressions being used in Bible translation contexts to interpret everything from adjectives and noun phrases to verb phrases and discourse peak. In each case, the elaborate expression provided a vivid, intensifying effect—a foothold for the imagination on the cliffs of interpretation. Of course, we may still ask whether or not the translators were, in each case, justified in using such devices.

In Luke 2:9, to recall our earlier discussion, the clause *δόξα κυρίου περιέλαμψεν αὐτούς* was translated using a pair of elaborate expressions in the CLB. Compare the CLB translation in (6.1) with the CUV translation in (6.2):

(6.1) CLB translation of δόξα κυρίου περιέλαμψεν αὐτούς in Luke 2:9

荣 光 闪 烁， 照 耀 四 方
róng+guāng- shǎn+shuò, zhào+yào- sì+fāng
glory+light- flash+sparkle, shine+dazzle- four+place
'the brilliant flashing lights of glory dazzled the entire landscape'

(6.2) CUV translation of δόξα κυρίου περιέλαμψεν αὐτούς in Luke 2:9

主 的 荣 光 四 面 照 着 他 们
zhǔ de róng+guāng sì+ miàn zhào zhe tāmen
Lord POSS glory- light four-face shine PROG 3S PL
'The glory of the Lord (was) shining all around them'

In the interest of emotive vividness and discourse-level clarity, the CLB translation leaves some information implicit (i.e., the genitive construction, "of the Lord" and the redundant plural pronoun referent, "them/themselves") and makes other information explicit (i.e., the resplendent, disquieting nature of the event). The CUV translation, however, is careful to maintain mechanical accuracy of detail within the immediate clause. If the motivation for translation is "no morpheme left behind," the CUV approach is laudable, and the CLB approach is suspect. If the motivation of translation is "never judge a meaning til you've walked two moons in its moccasins," the CUV approach is suspect and the CLB approach is laudable.

In terms of exposition, we are faced with the bedazzling splendor of *δόξα κυρίου*, a phrase used in the Septuagint (e.g., Exodus 16:10) to translate כְּבוֹד יְהוָה *kebōd yahweh* or 'the visible presence of the LORD' (Reiling and Swellengrebel 1971:111). Not only are we dealing with the sublime drama of sudden, blinding glory, we are also dealing with narrative discourse peak. Not only is this clause the announcement of a climax in a local narrative, the clause also heralds the announcement of the key pivot in salvation history. Luke's audience would have tapped into the emotional weight of the drama, recalling Zechariah's words in Luke 1:78 (Johnson and Harrington 1991) and the prophet Isaiah's declaration in Isaiah 9:2. Furthermore, the direct result of the epiphany evokes an emotion of terror in the shepherd participants in the text. For all of its morphological "accuracy," the CUV translation of Luke 2:9 has an anticlimactic effect. The CLB rendering, on the other hand, entrusts emergent text-level meaning to the reader and provides a crucial foothold for the interpretive imagination.

Certainly, there are times when this effect may seem to be taken to extremes in Chinese target-language translation. In 1 Corinthians 8:10, for instance, when Paul describes believers with strong consciences "eating in an idol's temple," the CLB translates the verb "eating," 大吃大喝 *dà chī dà hē*, 'big-eat-big-drink', or "gobbling and gulping." Once again, the elaborate expression manages to produce an intensifying effect while making implicit information explicit, this time adding a touch of humor in the process, but is Paul's attitude in the passage consistent with a touch of humor in the emergent text-level meaning? Whatever the answer, whether we criticize this choice or not, we should not forget a much more neglected critical rift: the scarcity of scholarly critiques on translation philosophies that assume textual faithfulness to be a matter of logical or recursive sentence-level mechanics. Perhaps approaches to textual faithfulness may themselves be compared to "eating in an idol's temple."

Structure comes from meaning and subsists as the servant of meaning. Furthermore, the micro-structures of a given text never subsist independently of the text's macro-structure. Treating a four-syllable elaborate expression as a microcosmic text in itself may clarify this dialectic further, particularly if we seek to translate an elaborate expression into English. Let us return again to 四面八方 *sì miàn bā fāng* 'four-faces-eight-places'. We remember that the structure of the expression's "number+noun, number+noun" compounds also yields an ABAB rhetorical structure in the micro-text through which our expectations are both affirmed and exceeded. Space is metaphorically conceived of in terms of quantity, surfaces and locations. We may note the expression's lexicalized status as we sift through our own available stock of phrases that enable us to conceive of the extremities of space through reference to quantity. Although we have not lexicalized "four faces" in English, we have lexicalized "four corners"; although we have not lexicalized "eight places" in English, we have lexicalized "seven seas." What of the micro-textual movement from one vision of extremity to a "double" vision of extremity? And what of the expression's euphonious qualities? The following combination is one way of satisfying the poetic demands of emergent text-level meaning, moving from Chinese to English: "from earth's four corners to its seven seas."

6.2. Translation and Language Philosophy in Light of Centripetal Interaction

Our philosophy of linguistic meaning will inevitably influence our translation choices, and this is particularly true at the textual level of interpretation. Traditional hermeneutics, with it's focus on parsing sentences, studying verb forms, and poring over dictionaries, can easily miss some of the most critical aspects of textual meaning which are signaled by various prominence marking features of discourse, such as discourse markers (which often trump the lexical and syntactic "units" of the text; see Walrod 2006b), not to mention the metaphorical actions of sections of the text and of the text as a whole.

Discourse markers like "however" or "nevertheless," for instance—far from being mechanical paragraph signals, adverbials, or conjunctions—are themselves inherently poetic devices. Everything preceding them in the text must be reinterpreted in their light, and new expectancy chains are set up for everything that follows; or we are at least alerted to the fact that the previous expectancy chains will no longer serve well. The cognitive operation involved in interpreting such devices is not merely logical-symbolic or discourse-recursive but, more importantly, an act of imaginative reinterpretation through centripetal or metaphorical interaction. The appearance of such markers requires us to think of one chunk of text in terms of another through the midwifery of a morpheme. Far from being brute adverbials, such morphemes are poetic exceptions, alerting us that what follows does not follow the cognitive script or frame that had been invoked by what preceded. Such discourse markers communicate something substantially more profound than "Behold, I am a polysystemic counterfactual," they tell us, rather, "Fasten your seat belts, turn on your imagination and prepare for semantic turbulence for the emergence of text-level meaning."

Translation is only "radically indeterminate" (Quine 1990:47ff) if we make two assumptions:

1. if objectivist semantics are more desirable than emergentist semantics, and
2. if links between meaning, emotion and aesthetics are undesirable.

Similarly, for an adequate theory of meaning, we need only fear the (false) dichotomy set up between translation and paraphrase if we wish to deny the crucial role of the imagination in the interpretive process.

Translating the apostle James' critique of one who "does not bridle his own tongue" (James 1:26), Philippine translators were advised by Ga'dang translation partners to use the nearest equivalent poetic expression *awan a tulangngeno bifingnga*, those who "have no bones in their lips." The imagery seems to be that lips with no bones just flap out of control, i.e. the person does not control his speech. Yet explanation is never required, nor is there any evidence that reinterpretation is needed, any more than in the case of "bridles not the tongue." Nobody imagines a person wearing a bridle and then cognitively chokes on that interpretation only to seek a more logical one. Similarly, Ga'dang speakers have no trouble construing the meaning of *na'ata katawa-na*, 'uncooked/unripe laugh-his', meaning his laughter is insincere or forced. *Na'ata* normally refers to that which is not ready for consumption, such as unripe fruit or rice which is not fully cooked. In both of these poetic expressions in Ga'dang, cultural and contextual constraints (Walrod 2007) guide us directly to the appropriate emergent meaning.

Challenging traditional positivistic and reductionist views of linguistics and hermeneutics can be unsettling. Some are inclined to believe that to do so undermines our confidence in the sacred text. Our contention is that those views have already been thoroughly undermined, so we now need an articulation of a context-sensitive hermeneutics which not only allows for confidence in the text but also establishes our confidence on a more sure foundation of understanding. We can accept the notions that meaning creation and meaning construal will always be an event which is immediate and context sensitive ("inevitable contextual embeddedness," Toolan 1996:3).

7. Conclusion

An adequate theory of translation must be built on a responsible philosophy of language. The position articulated above strongly suggests that the notion of "fidelity to the text" is not very useful at the levels of particle, morpheme, word, phrase, clause or syntax. It is well known that achieving equivalence at these "lower" linguistic levels is most difficult, if not impossible, whether equivalence is formally or functionally construed. In fact, we have consciously sought to consider elaborate expressions as self-contained microcosmic texts partially in order to disabuse ourselves of their default linguistic interpretation as brute morpheme combinations or compositional strings of words that output fixed phrases or clauses. Instead, translation "equivalence" must be sought and found in the emergent text-level meaning.

Practically speaking, however, being able to exploit elaborate expressions, discourse markers, and discourse structure, in order to achieve text-level equivalency, requires thorough knowledge of these features in both source and target languages. Good translations have been achieved over many years by translators who have such fluency in source and target languages, even though they may have been quite

oblivious to the philosophy of language espoused in this paper. However, current translation theory and practice in some cases looks for methods and strategies that provide quick results, but ignore the phenomena of emergent text-level meaning, and of text-level equivalency. This study casts a critical eye on methodologies that encourage the search for equivalency at the word level, such as fairly mechanical word-for-word adaptations from a trade language or national language text. Such approaches are likely to generate drafts in target languages that may well interfere with a translators' ability to practice their art, their ability to craft an optimal discourse structure, their ability to create the conditions for appropriate emergent text-level meaning. The interplay of words and syntax in discourse is akin to the interplay of the original colors from the artist's palette in the production of a masterpiece. In the final painting, the original colors no longer exist in isolation and no longer have discrete borders; rather, they blend and merge to create the gestalt meaning of the work of art. Just as beauty and meaning emerge in a work of art, so does text-level meaning emerge in discourse.

Now that we have discussed some of the ways in which the meaning of meaning matters, perhaps we should return to "ten thousand meaningful matters":

万 事 如 意
wàn *shì* *rú* *yì*
ten thousand+matters-as.if+meaning

How should we translate this expression? Paying attention to the overt polysemy and overlapping semantics of "wish" and "meaning" in Chinese, we should consider the sense it yields of an implicit fusion of our own wishes with those of our interlocutors. We should consider the wished for fusion of quality (purpose, meaning) and quantity (ten thousand, a great number), which intersect well in "bounty." We should consider the ways in which the conventionally construed illocutionary force of the expression interacts with its first two morphemes to weave a blanket application of the utterance to the practical workings of life, its routine crises and events. We should consider the centripetal effect of its euphonious phonological and morpho-semantic combinations, its rhetorical ABAB echo of modifier and modified. Due to the conventionalized nature of the expression, we should also consider referencing our own stock of available idiomatic phrases. Having done so, and recalling an earlier exercise, instead of wishing you "all the best, everywhere," we prefer to wish you,

万事如意
wàn shì rú yì
Bountiful days with troubles at bay,

四面八方
sì miàn bā fāng
from earth's four corners to its seven seas.

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