

Translation, philosophy, materialism

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Philosophy does not escape the embarrassment that faces contemporary academic disciplines when confronted with the problem of translation. In philosophical research, widespread dependence on translated texts coincides with neglect of their translated status, a general failure to take into account the differences introduced by the fact of translation. The problem is perhaps most glaring in Anglo-American cultures, where native philosophical traditions from empiricism to logical semantics have privileged the idea of language as communication and therefore imagined the transparency of the translated text. But even in Continental traditions like existential phenomenology and poststructuralism, where language is viewed as constitutive of thought and translating can more readily be seen as determining the domestic significance of the foreign text, philosophical argument and speculation give only passing acknowledgment to their reliance on translations.

Philosophy has long engaged in the creation of concepts by interpreting domestic versions of foreign texts, but for the most part these versions have been taken as transparent, and the concepts unmediated by the domestic language and culture that is their medium. This is never more true than on the rare occasions when a translation is actually noticed in reviews and studies: philosophers assume that transparency is an attainable ideal by evaluating the accuracy of the translation as a correspondence to the foreign text, chastising the translator for missing the foreign philosopher's intention or the full significance of the foreign philosophical terms. In such cases, translations are presumably adjusted – brought into a more adequate relation to the essential meaning of the foreign text – whereas the adequacy that is in fact established reverts to a domestic standard, usually a stylistic canon or a competing interpretation applied implicitly by the critic.

Translation exposes a fundamental idealism in

philosophy by calling attention to the material conditions of concepts, their linguistic and discursive forms, the different meanings and functions they come to possess in different cultural situations. And in so doing translation offers philosophy an opportunity for self-criticism, a scrutiny of philosophical discourses and institutions and a rethinking of current practices in the interpreting and translating of philosophical texts. My aim is to challenge the neglect of translation in academic philosophy by taking a materialist approach, one that does not abandon the philosophical project of concept formation but grounds it in the difference that translating opens in the materiality of the philosophical text. The questions I want to address are both basic and practical: What does philosophy stand to gain from thinking about the domestic determinations and effects of translations? And how can this thinking contribute to the translating of foreign philosophies?

1. The gain of translation: Wittgenstein's *Investigations*

The reception of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* is a remarkable example of the marginality of translation in the discipline of philosophy. When first published in 1953, the text was bilingual, with G.E.M. Anscombe's English version facing the German. Very few of the fifteen or so reviews that greeted it even mentioned the quality of her translating, and in these instances the comments were extremely brief, restricted to vague honorifics like 'excellent', 'well done', 'on the whole very successful and reliable', 'adequate and honest'.¹ Despite their brevity, such comments make clear that the translation was judged in terms of its correspondence to the German text, to Wittgenstein's unusual style of philosophizing, to the meanings of his concepts. Most reviewers tacitly assumed this correspondence by avoiding any reference to Anscombe's

work at all and devoting their reviews to critical expositions of Wittgenstein's ideas and arguments. To document the latter, they quoted from the English version as if he wrote it, as if it were a simple communication of his intended meanings.²

Because of the negligible attention paid to Anscombe's translation, criticisms were very slow in coming. But when they finally appeared, they continued to assume correspondence as the criterion of accuracy, an assumption that proved to be rather disingenuous because it concealed competing domestic interpretations of the German text. Saul Kripke questioned Anscombe's renderings of '*Seele* and its derivatives sometimes as "soul", sometimes as "mind", depending on the context', because he found a sentence in the German text where "'mind" might be a less misleading translation of *Seele*'.³ If 'soul' was 'misleading', then it was a mistranslation, an inaccurate expression of Wittgenstein's concept. Yet Kripke's rationale for using 'mind' ultimately had less to do with communicating the foreign text than with assimilating it to the domestic culture, to the secularism and anti-foundationalism that prevails in Anglo-American philosophy, and to Kripke's own investment in these values. 'For the contemporary English speaking philosophical reader,' he explained, '["mind"] is somewhat less loaded with special philosophical and religious connotations.' This tendency to domesticate Wittgenstein's text, to assimilate it to domestic intelligibilities and interests, was strengthened in 1963, when *Philosophical Investigations* began to be published without the German. Today the English-language philosophical reader first encounters Wittgenstein as an English-language philosopher, which for all intents and purposes he remains, given the virtual invisibility of translation in Anglo-American philosophy.

To make Anscombe's version visible, we must avoid the assumption that language, especially language with the conceptual density of philosophical discourse, can ever simply express ideas without simultaneously destabilizing and reconstituting them. Wittgenstein's own philosophy warns against this assumption by questioning the possibility of personal expression, arguing that statements of intentionality are matters of linguistic convention, not logical necessity. We will go further: any language use is prone to the unpredictable variation that Jean-Jacques Lecercle terms the 'remainder': linguistic effects triggered by the variety of forms which the user employs selectively to communicate, but which, because of their circulation in social groups and insti-

tutions, always carry a collective force that outstrips any individual's control and complicates intended meanings.⁴ Translating increases this unpredictability. To the foreign text it attaches a peculiarly domestic remainder, textual effects triggered by the dialects, registers and discourses that comprise the target language, and that therefore exceed the foreign writer's intention (and sometimes the translator's as well). Hence, no English translation can ever simply communicate Wittgenstein's German text without simultaneously inscribing it with English-language forms that destabilize and reconstitute his philosophy.

Consider a typical excerpt from Anscombe's version:

Das Benennen erscheint als eine *seltsame* Verbindung eines Wortes mit einem Gegenstand. – Und so eine seltsame Verbindung hat wirklich statt, wenn nämlich der Philosoph, um herauszubringen, was *die* Beziehung zwischen Namen und Benannten ist, auf einen Gegenstand vor sich starrt und dabei unzählige Male einen Namen wiederholt, oder auch das Wort 'dieses'. Denn die philosophischen Probleme entstehen, wenn die Sprache *feiert*. Und *da* können wir uns allerdings einbilden, das Benennen sei irgend ein merkwürdiger seelischer Akt, quasi eine Taufe eines Gegenstandes. Und wir können so auch das Wort 'dieses' gleichsam *zu* dem Gegenstand sagen, ihn damit *ansprechen* – ein seltsamer Gebrauch dies Wortes, der wohl nur beim Philosophieren vorkommt.

Naming appears as a *queer* connexion of a word with an object. – And you really get such a queer connexion when the philosopher tries to bring out *the* relation between name and thing by staring at an object in front of him and repeating a name or even the word 'this' innumerable times. For philosophical problems arise when language *goes on holiday*. And *here* we may indeed fancy naming to be some remarkable act of mind, as it were a baptism of an object. And we can also say the word 'this' *to* the object, as it were *address* the object as 'this' – a queer use of this word, which doubtless only occurs in doing philosophy.⁵

The translation is cast mostly in a plain register of the standard dialect of English, but the orthography is British and Anscombe draws noticeably on British colloquialisms: the verb 'fancy', the use of 'holiday' and 'queer' where American English would substitute 'vacation' (or 'day off') and 'strange'. The colloquialisms are heightened by the more educated strain in the lexicon ('innumerable', 'as it were', 'address', 'doubtless'), which contains as well some philosophical abstractions ('object', 'connexion', 'relation', 'philosophy').

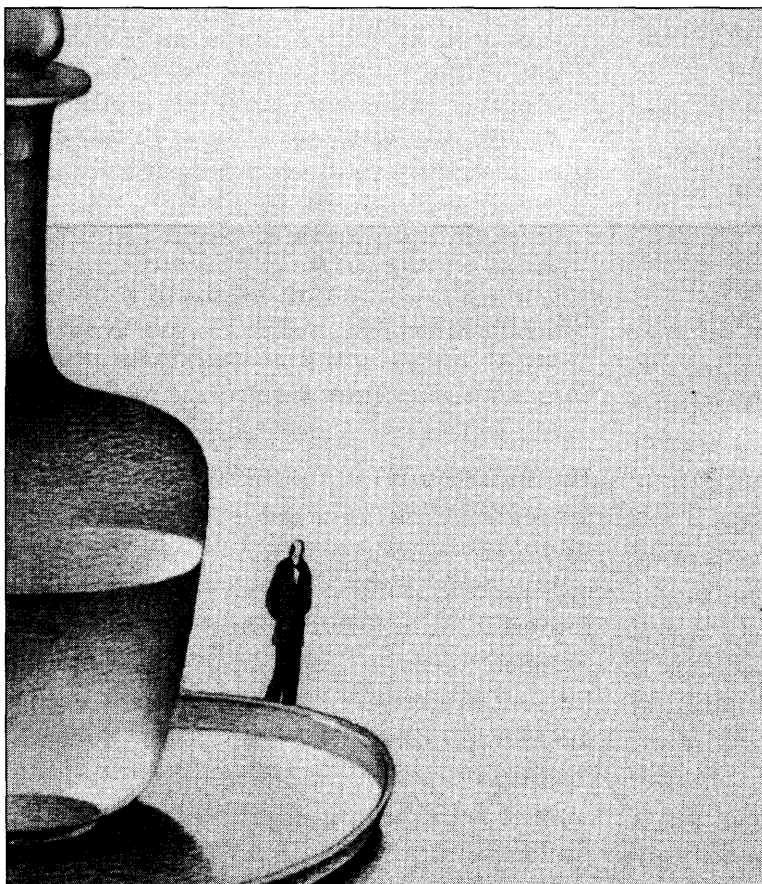
This heterogeneous mix of Englishes is sufficient to cast doubt on any effort to evaluate the translation merely by comparing it to the German text. It might be thought, for instance, that the different dialects, registers and discourses correspond to the most frequently remarked qualities of Wittgenstein's prose, 'at once rhetorical and informal'.⁶ Any such correspondence, however, can hold only at the most general level: a comparison of the above excerpt with the German text immediately reveals points where Anscombe's version is deviant and excessive. Nothing in the German evokes a difference comparable to that between British and other forms of English, a difference that is national in scope. And nothing in the German quite matches the colloquial register hit by 'fancy' and 'holiday': the first avoids the customary English equivalent, 'imagine', for the German 'einbilden', while the second excludes the customary range of possibilities ('celebrates', 'stops work', 'idles') for the German 'feiert'. Anscombe's choices can't be classified as errors in the sense of ignoring the meanings assigned to these words in current dictionaries. Yet the effect of her choices undoubtedly goes beyond any equivalence based on lexicography.

In Anscombe's English, Wittgenstein acquired a British remainder that has exerted a powerful force in philosophical discourses and institutions. The thinking in *Philosophical Investigations* was itself eccentric, a

departure from the logical positivism that dominated British philosophy during the 1930s and 1940s. The diverse language of the translation, as well as the discontinuous and uncertain form of the text (discrete numbered sections that were in part assembled by Wittgenstein's editors), inevitably increased the contrast to current philosophical trends, where the style of writing was more formal and less familiar, more analytically precise and less metaphorically suggestive, more academic and less popular. Anscombe's translation can be said to have communicated Wittgenstein's ideas, even to have mimicked his style of writing. Yet in the process both were overlaid with a domestic remainder that also enabled them to be transgressive: the translation both marked and crossed the institutional boundaries of British philosophy, allowing the text to remain irreducibly foreign even as it entered the domestic culture. 'Each sentence', wrote a reviewer of the translation, 'is clear and almost colloquial', but the cumulative effect of the sentences is peculiar'.⁷ This peculiarity hasn't vanished: although Wittgenstein's ideas have deeply influenced British philosophy, the style of Anscombe's translation has not produced any imitators among British philosophers and her 'unusual' renderings continue to be revised by other commentators.⁸ Even the so-called 'ordinary language' philosophers, who, like Wittgenstein, analyse everyday speech, write with an academic

formality dotted with jargon (e.g. J.L. Austin's distinction between 'performative' and 'constative' utterances). The case of Wittgenstein shows that from reading the remainder in an influential translation, philosophy gains a historical knowledge of itself, of the hierarchical arrangement of discourses that exists in the discipline at any given moment and that variously affects the importation of foreign philosophies, admitting, excluding and transforming them in accordance with domestic values.

The workings of the remainder are collective and therefore question any narrowly biographical understanding of the translation, any individualistic assumption that it somehow mirrors the intention or experience of the foreign writer (or the translator). It might be argued, for instance, that the British colloquialisms reflect Wittgenstein's own use of English. As a student who attended Wittgenstein's lectures in Cambridge



and then as a friend and colleague who hosted him in the last years of his life, Anscombe would have been very familiar with his English conversation and writing. Her translation might be seen as adequate to his version of the text if he had written it in English. Norman Malcolm, another former student, recalls that Wittgenstein ‘spoke excellent English, with the accent of an educated Englishman’, and was not averse to using colloquial expressions, some distinctly British, such as when he referred to his lectures as ‘a lot of rubbish’ or described food as ‘grand’ or mentioned his fondness for ‘detective mags’ – a notable source of slang. ‘One of Wittgenstein’s favourite phrases’, Malcolm observes, ‘was the exclamation, “Leave the bloody thing alone!”’⁹

Nevertheless, the fact remains that Wittgenstein wrote *Philosophical Investigations* in German, not English. And he didn’t choose the colloquialisms that appear in Anscombe’s translation. In the specific case of the German word ‘*feiert*’, her choice of ‘goes on holiday’ has actually been criticized as inconsistent with his intention. The authors of a full-scale commentary on the text have asserted that Wittgenstein ‘preferred’ a different rendering, ‘idles’, although without providing any documentation, apparently on the strength of a later section where he makes a similar remark:

Die Verwirrungen, die uns beschäftigen, entstehen gleichsam, wenn die Sprache leerläuft, nicht wenn sie arbeitet.

The confusions that occupy us arise, as it were, when language idles, not when it is working.¹⁰

Another commentator has silently revised Anscombe’s version according to Wittgenstein’s undocumented preference: “Philosophical problems”, wrote Wittgenstein, “arise when language is *idling*”.¹¹ But this rendering can be no more than another possible alternative, no closer to Wittgenstein’s intention than the version made by his student and friend. Any translation can only submit the foreign text to a *domestic* interpretation, based on some sort of reconstruction – lexicographical, textual, biographical – that answers to the needs of a particular interpretive occasion.

The fascinating thing about Anscombe’s version is precisely the interpretive richness of its remainder. A colloquialism like ‘goes on holiday’, along with the vaguely metaphorical use to which it is put, is unexpected in Anglo-American philosophical discourse, even in a text as informally ruminative as Wittgenstein’s. As a result, it stands out more conspicuously against the otherwise standard dialect in the translation, and sets

going an uncontrollable proliferation of English meanings.

The statement in which the phrase appears – ‘philosophical problems arise when language *goes on holiday*’ – has usually been taken as Wittgenstein’s criticism of certain kinds of philosophy, namely linguistic analysis that is either metaphysical, conceiving of meaning as a mental or spiritual essence, or positivist, reducing semantics to the formal rules of logic.¹² In support of this reading, Wittgenstein’s commentators point out that he considered the meaning of a word to be contextually determined, not essential but conventional, a function of its use in a specific social practice or ‘language-game’ (*Sprachspiel*). ‘Language goes on holiday’, then, when metaphysical or positivist philosophers wrongly speculate on the meaning of a word apart from its practical application, its job. In one of Wittgenstein’s recurrent examples, builders can meaningfully exchange terms for building materials because the terms are defined by their use on the job.

To communicate Wittgenstein’s criticism of other philosophers, Anscombe’s choice must signify the stoppage of work, which ‘holiday’ definitely does. But the word also connotes playful activity that is performed within a conventionally defined period (a bank holiday, Christmas, summer vacation), and thereby suggests that the philosophical use of language participates in a language-game too; that when a word is discussed philosophically, detached from its practical use, it is merely doing a different kind of work, in a different language-game. Philosophy, it could be argued, is always taking language on a busman’s holiday. This applies not just to metaphysicians and logical positivists, but to Wittgenstein as well. Doesn’t his own use of the builders’ terms depart from the work of building to do philosophical work, to create the concept of a language-game and thus resolve the philosophical problem of meaning?

The translation points to the conflicting possibilities in the German (‘*feiert*’ can be translated by ‘goes on holiday’ as well as ‘idles’) and opens up a contradiction in Wittgenstein’s text that reveals the deep conservatism of his philosophy. He doesn’t see the methodological likeness between his and the other philosophies because he is more concerned with their impact on linguistic problems. In so far as he dismisses philosophies that interrupt the practical application of language, he restricts the evaluation of language-games to their smooth functioning, their maintenance of the status quo. Wittgenstein’s builders use language to build a project; not to conceptualize

its status as a language-game, nor to discuss their working conditions or their wages, the relationship of their work to other projects, other kinds of work, other people. He believed that 'philosophy may in no way interfere with the actual use of language; it can in the end only describe it', not explain it, because explanation depends on theoretical assumptions that lead to misunderstanding.¹³ Yet any description that 'leaves everything as it is', far from giving mere facts, effectively assumes a theory of ethical and political value wherein language-games are judged to be good and just, worth the effort to keep functioning. This value may be construed as a democratic ideal, since language-games theoretically lose their ability or right to dominate other games. Yet in practice they are always arranged hierarchically, whether according to the use at hand or their institutional function. Wittgenstein undoubtedly challenged the language-games currently played in philosophy – yet with an alternative that would seem, paradoxically, to recommend a quietism toward them, toward the stylistic and discursive hierarchies in the discipline.

Anscombe's choice of 'holiday' thus makes possible a competing reading of Wittgenstein's philosophy – but only when her translation is examined from a materialist perspective. Reading for the remainder means focusing on the linguistic and cultural differences that English inscribes in the German text and then considering their reconstitution of Wittgenstein's ideas. In effect, Anscombe's colloquialism establishes a metacommentary on key themes in the German, notably the language-game and the criticism of other philosophical concepts of meaning. But the comment I derived from her rendering was obviously against the grain of Wittgenstein's text: my materialist assumptions brought to light the determinations and effects, not only of the translation but also of Wittgenstein's philosophy, the social conditions concealed by his conservative notion of the language-game. Reading for the remainder in a translation forces a self-awareness upon the interpreter, the knowledge that textual effects can be made intelligible and significant only from a specific theoretical orientation. This self-awareness is absent from the dominant reading of Anscombe's text, where the idealism of transparent translation is assumed, and the colloquial expression is interpreted in deference to Wittgenstein's philosophy (or at least to the part of it that supports a particular commentary). Thus, an interpreter who noticed the peculiarity of Anscombe's choice – 'If language goes on holiday during philosophical rumi-

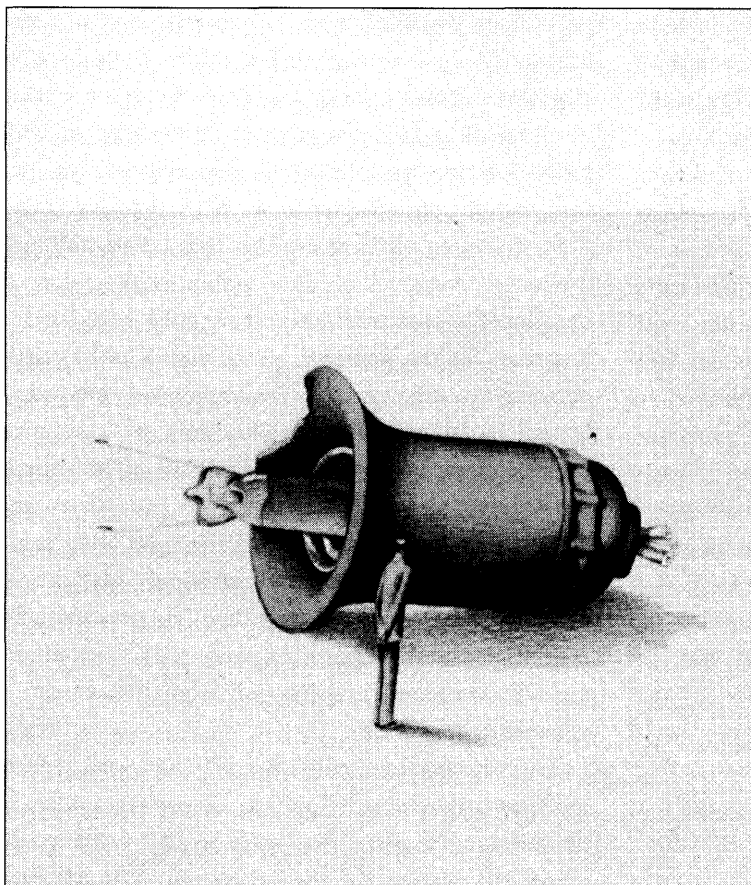
nation, it is a working holiday' – nonetheless found it consistent with Wittgenstein's ideas: 'the philosopher's conception of meaning accounts for his cavalier attitude toward context'.¹⁴

The remainder is unpredictable. The metacommentary it sets going in a philosophical translation will take different forms in different contexts, depending as much on the specific ideas under discussion as on the interpreter's assumptions. Consider another passage from Anscombe's translation, where the remainder leads not to an ideological critique, but to a more deferential exposition of Wittgenstein's philosophy:

Denk nur an den Ausdruck 'Ich hörte eine klagende Melodie'! Und nun die Frage: 'Hört er das Klagen?'

Think of the expression 'I heard a plaintive melody'. And now the question is: 'Does he *hear* the plaint?'¹⁵

The most striking feature of Anscombe's rendering is the archaism of key words. 'Plaintive' is antique, even if still in some use, reserved for poetical expressions, whereas 'plaint' is obsolete, appearing most frequently in British poetry of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries – for example, in Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Goldsmith's *Deserted Village* (*OED*). The ordinary German words '*klagende*' and '*Klagen*' can easily be translated into current English equivalents that preserve the repetition, such as 'lamenting' and 'lament' or 'complaining' and 'complaint'. Yet the archaisms are much more effective choices: they add another, poetical register to the fairly plain style and inscribe the German with a distinctively English significance that supports Wittgenstein's thinking. The passage, however oblique, seems to assume his concept of meaning as use in a language-game. Hence, the question 'Does he *hear* the plaint?' is rhetorical: the person who uses the expression 'I heard a plaintive melody' didn't hear any information communicated by the music, no complaint, but rather remembered previous musical applications of the word 'plaintive' and therefore applied it to the sound he heard, his physical sensation, and perhaps to the emotion he felt upon hearing it, his psychological response. The language-game, for Wittgenstein, is primarily a social practice in which meaning is assigned to words according to certain conventions and circumstances. Anscombe's poetical archaisms in effect make this point because they illustrate the idea of conventionality, although in literature. Their resonance in English literary history transforms 'Does he *hear* the plaint?' into 'Does he



manifesting the tendency of philosophy – including plain-style British traditions – to create technical terminologies, to increase the conceptual density of language and move it away from everyday speech. In other choices, Anscombe does in fact yield to the plain style that has dominated British philosophy since Bacon and Locke, to its preference for current usage, continuous syntax, and univocal meaning and its suspicion of figurative language. In Wittgenstein's criticism of other linguistic philosophies, for example, she translated '*wenn die Sprache leerläuft*' ('when language idles') as 'when language is like an engine idling', thereby removing an elliptical metaphor and making the analogy more explicit for the English-language reader.¹⁶ Behind such choices we can ultimately perceive the long-standing dominance of fluent strategies in English-language translating, where the aim is immediate intelligibility and the absence of any

hear the traditional applications of the poeticism "plaintive" to music?' Here the metacommentary established by the remainder can be seen as performative, enacting on the stylistic level the concept stated on the thematic level.

Of course the unpredictability of the remainder means that not all of its effects are so conspicuous or so significant as the examples I have chosen. Some are subtle, becoming visible only on a comparison to the foreign text – although a comparison that is willing to reflect on the deviations and excesses of the translation, that doesn't seek a correspondence so as to eliminate the remainder. The most subtle effects in philosophical translations are also the most powerful in assimilating the foreign text to the disciplinary discourses and institutions of the domestic culture. This domestication occurs with any translating. Indeed, it is necessary if the foreign text is to become intelligible and interesting to domestic readers.

It is also at work in Anscombe's version, despite the estranging heterogeneity of her language. When Wittgenstein discusses the act of defining of words by pointing to an object, '*hinweisende Definition*', she uses the Latinate technical term 'ostensive' for the German word '*hinweisende*', which can also be rendered as 'pointing', 'referring', 'demonstrative', 'indicative'. In choosing 'ostensive' Anscombe was

linguistic or stylistic peculiarities that might pre-empt the illusion of transparency.¹⁷

The remainder at once enriches and redirects the interpretation of philosophical translations. The sort of interpretation it demands continues to be philosophical, engaged in conceptual analysis, but now made more literary, concerned with the formal properties of language, and more historical, concerned with various domestic traditions – linguistic, literary, philosophical. The addition of effects that work only in the target language thickens the semantic burden of the foreign text by posing the problem of their relation to its concepts and arguments, their potential articulation as a metacommentary. Understanding those effects also involves the problem of their relation to a range of domestic practices and institutions: the competing interpretations that domestic philosophers have put forward for the foreign text, the hierarchies of styles and discourses that characterize domestic academic philosophy, and the social functioning of philosophy among the other practices and institutions in its historical moment. The remainder in a translation demonstrates, with varying degrees of violence to the foreign text and the target language, that the philosophical project of concept formation is fundamentally determined by its linguistic and cultural conditions. Translation remains the dark secret of philosophy

precisely because the remainder shatters the bedrock assumption of this project in its modern academic form: the stability and authority of the philosophical subject as the autonomous agent of reflection.

2. Strategies of philosophical translation

To be useful in translating foreign philosophies, the remainder requires a reformulation of the notion of accuracy, a broadening that takes into account both the foreign text and domestic readers. It would be more precise, in fact, to reserve the term 'accuracy' for lexicographical equivalence and instead refer to the translator's ethical responsibilities. Translation is a complicated act of communicating, a communication through a reconstitution of the foreign text, and it should not be seen as good unless it signifies the linguistic and cultural difference of that text for domestic constituencies. The ethical value of this difference resides in alerting the reader to a process of domestication that has taken place in the translating, but also in preventing that process from slipping into a wholesale assimilation to dominant domestic values. The translator's opportunities to perform these tasks occur first in choosing a foreign text and then in developing a discursive strategy to translate it. Foreign philosophies can retain their difference in translation when they differ to some extent from those that currently dominate the discipline at home, or when they are translated so as to differ from prevailing domestic interpretations of their concepts and discourses. The best philosophical translating is itself philosophical in forming a concept of the foreign text based on an assessment of the domestic scene. But the concept ought to be defamiliarizing, not based on a ratification of that scene.¹⁸

The translator's responsibility is not just twofold – foreign and domestic – but split into two opposing obligations: to establish a lexicographical equivalence for a conceptually dense text, while intelligibly maintaining its foreignness to domestic readerships. Translating motivated by this ethics of difference seeks to inform domestic readers of foreign philosophies, but also to provoke them. It acknowledges that foreign concepts and discourses can change domestic institutions by forcing a self-criticism and by stimulating the invention of new philosophies, new philosophical canons and curricula, new qualifications for academic philosophers. And it takes responsibility for these possible consequences by manipulating the remainder, the effects in the target-language that signal the second-order status of the translation by distinguish-

ing it from the foreign text. From this point of view, translation is less responsible when it follows an ethics of sameness, when it chooses foreign texts and develops discursive strategies so as to shore up institutional limits, establishing a domestic equivalence for foreign concepts and discourses that minimizes their unsettling differences. This translating, although it may be considered accurate within the discipline, is questionable because it has less regard for the foreign text than for the domestic status quo. The linguistic peculiarities released by the remainder provide a textual basis for judging a philosophical translation because they constitute a means of gauging how much the foreign text has succumbed to or resisted the domestication performed during the translating process. It was in fact Anscombe's strikingly heterogeneous language that allowed her to preserve the eccentricity of Wittgenstein's philosophy – and attract the criticisms and revisions of more domesticating commentators.

English-language translators of philosophical texts have long shown an awareness of the remainder, of the irreducible difference introduced by the translation, but they have tended to restrain it by adhering to the Anglo-American preference for fluency, immediate intelligibility, the illusion of transparent communication. As a result, they have not been very critical of the domestic values that the remainder inscribes in the foreign text. Benjamin Jowett, the distinguished Victorian translator of Plato, asserted that a translation 'should be based, in the first instance, on an intimate knowledge of the text', but also that 'it should read as an original work', concealing not merely its status as a translation, but the translator's decision to 'sacrifice minute accuracy for the sake of clearness and sense'. To secure transparency, Jowett recommended a homogeneous English style that relies mostly on current usage, recognizable and therefore highly accessible: 'no word, however expressive and exact, should be employed, which makes the reader stop to think, or unduly attracts attention by difficulty or peculiarity, or disturbs the effect of the surrounding language'. Yet despite this effort to control the excesses of the remainder, Jowett's own literary and religious values visibly shaped his work. He allowed that 'equivalents may be drawn from Shakespeare', provided that they are 'used sparingly', and 'a similar principle should be observed in the employment of Scripture'.¹⁹ Jowett's version of Plato mixed Jacobean with later literary forms, especially the style of the King James Bible, producing a rich strain of archaism that George

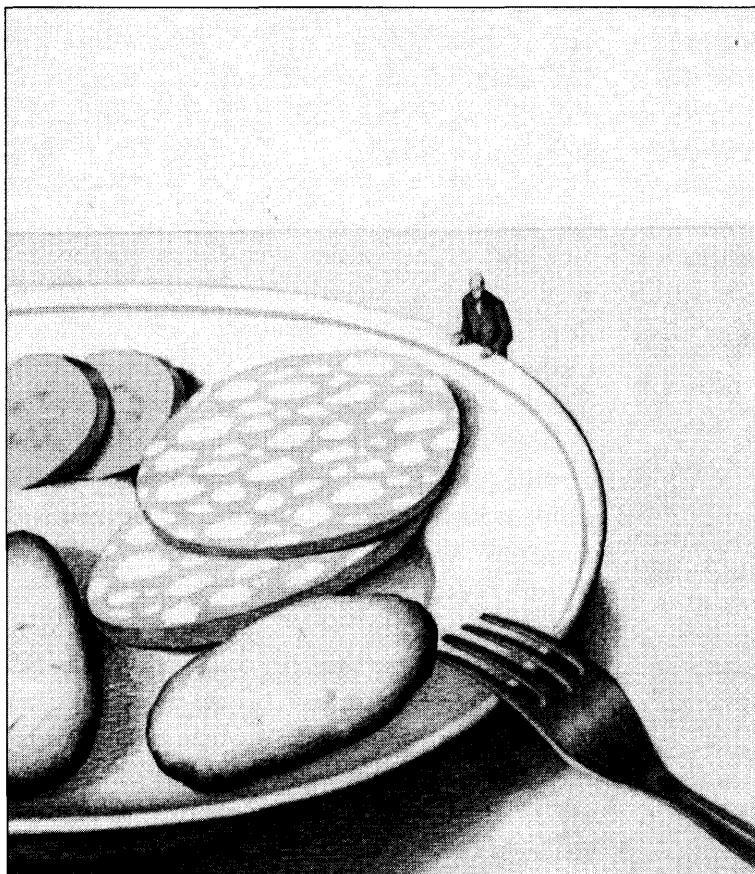
Steiner has described as 'the language of 1611 ... filtered through that of the later seventeenth century and that of the Victorian poets'.²⁰ This translation aligned the Greek texts with dominant traditions in English culture, helping to ensure that Platonic philosophy would simultaneously lose some of its pagan unfamiliarity and retain its canonical status in academic institutions.

Continental philosophy has most inspired English-language translators to challenge the discursive regime of transparency and experiment with the remainder. And the experiments have often been successful in preserving the linguistic and cultural difference of this philosophy on the Anglo-American scene. Translators of Heidegger's texts have been particularly effective in developing new translation strategies, not only because his neologisms and etymologies, puns and grammatical shifts demand comparable inventiveness but also because his texts address translation as a philosophical problem, exploring its decisive role in constituting the meaning of concepts. With rare exceptions, these translators have been academic philosophers who allowed Heidegger's philosophy to increase their translatorly self-consciousness, as well as to inform their own philosophical research. Even here, however, the pull of domestication hasn't diminished, just taken different shapes. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson's

version of *Being and Time* does more than enough to reproduce Heidegger's stylistic peculiarities, partly by finding English that is equally peculiar and partly by relying on various scholarly conventions, like a glossary of key terms and detailed footnotes that explain the limitations of particular renderings. All the same, the translators admit to making 'numerous concessions to the reader' that conform to current English usage and alter the conceptual density of the German – for instance, inserting 'personal constructions where Heidegger has avoided them' and thereby complicating his anti-individualistic concept of human subjectivity.²¹

In 1962 such deviations proved to be inconsequential, too minimal to make Heidegger's philosophy any more accessible to English-language readers. The American pragmatist Sidney Hook wrote a mixed review that acknowledged Heidegger's enormous influence in Europe, but concluded that 'few philosophers will find the rewards of discovery commensurate with the pains of diving into and dredging [his book's] murky depths.'²² The first step in preserving the foreignness of Heidegger's text was of course Macquarrie and Robinson's decision to translate it: Heidegger's essays had been translated throughout the 1950s, amid popularizations of existentialism by academic philosophers (e.g. Barrett, *What is Existentialism?*, New York, 1947), but his style of thinking deviated so widely from the logical analysis prevailing in Anglo-American philosophy that he remained an alien figure in English deep into the 1970s. Today, when Continental philosophical traditions have gained greater acceptance in British and American universities and leading American philosophers like Richard Rorty feel they must take account of Heidegger's work, it is clear that his translators played a crucial role in reforming the canon of foreign philosophies in English.

For the translation of philosophy, the most important factor in this development is its experimentalism. Heidegger's translators created equivalences that tampered with current usage. They didn't just communicate his difficult concepts; they practised them through various discursive strategies. David Farrell Krell's version of



'The Anaximander Fragment' is a dazzling enactment of the translation theory that Heidegger himself at once expounds and enacts in translating Anaximander's Greek. Following Schleiermacher's notion of translation as bringing the domestic reader to the foreign text, Heidegger argues that 'our thinking must first, before translating, be translated to what is said in Greek' by abandoning modern 'presuppositions' that are anachronistic and antithetical to the ancient experience of 'Being'.²³ Because Anaximander was able to think of 'Being' as the 'presencing' of things, we must avoid assimilating the fragment to later metaphysical traditions that are positivist or idealist, that follow Aristotle or Plato in aiming to analyse or transcend existence, what Heidegger calls the 'collapse of thinking into the sciences and faith'. These traditions enter into the 'standard translation' of the Greek text, where Anaximander's thinking is represented as a moral cosmology, a 'philosophy of nature' in which 'inappropriate moralisms and legalisms are enmeshed'.²⁴ Heidegger cites the classicist Hermann Diels' close version, written in a modern German filled with moral and philosophical abstractions:

es on de e genesis esti tois ousi kai ten phthoran eis tauta ginesthai kata to chreon. didonai gar auta diken kai tisin allelois tes adikias kata ten tou chronou taxin.

Woraus aber die Dinge das Entstehen haben, dahin geht auch ihr Vergehen nach der Notwendigkeit; denn sie zahlen einander Strafe und Buße für ihre Ruchlosigkeit nach der festgesetzten Zeit.

But where things have their origin, there too their passing away occurs according to necessity; for they pay recompense and penalty to one another for their recklessness, according to firmly established time.²⁵

For Heidegger, the translation that best reproduces early Greek thinking is 'poetizing': it does 'violence' to everyday language by relying on German archaisms whose kinship to the Greek words he demonstrates in elaborate etymological interpretations. The essay concludes with his partial version of the fragment, a free rewriting that even includes a parenthetical insertion:

...entlang dem Brauch; gehören nämlich lassen sie Fug somit auch Ruch eines dem anderen (im Verwinden) des Un-Fugs.

...along the lines of usage; for they let order and thereby also reck belong to one another (in the surmounting) of disorder.²⁶

Krell's English follows Heidegger's German closely and manages to find an equivalent for at least one of the key archaisms. Whereas Heidegger resorts to two words from Middle High German, '*Fug*' and '*Ruch*', which he redefines as 'order' and 'care' on the basis of later variants, '*Unfug*' ('nonsense', 'disorder') and '*Ruchlos*' ('reckless'), Krell uses 'reck', an Anglo-Saxon word that fell into disuse during the early modern period, was revived in the nineteenth century as a poeticism, and is currently obsolete (*OED*). The repetition of the unfamiliar 'reck' throughout Krell's version works powerfully upon the English-language reader: it underscores the conceptual density that Heidegger assigns to the German *Ruch*, the archaic ontological value of the term, while calling attention to the foreignness of his thinking in relation to contemporary Anglo-American philosophy. The translation made reviewers aware that they were reading a translation, and a very accomplished one, not to be confused with the text that Heidegger wrote. Thus, they not only judged Krell's work successful because it was 'faithful', but praised it for clarifying the German.²⁷ 'What more can one say about a translation', wrote John Caputo, 'than that it helps one to understand the original?'

The unpredictability of the remainder, however, comes back to haunt the translations, Heidegger's as well as Krell's. Archaism is undoubtedly a very effective choice in translating an essay whose theme is ancient thinking and whose method is etymology. Krell peppers his version with other English archaisms to render German words that are not obsolete, but in common use. He translates '*Graben*' ('trench', 'ditch') as 'abyss'; '*in ihrem täglichen niederen und hohen Gebrauch*' ('in its daily low and high use') as 'in common everyday parlance as well as in its learned employ'; '*Beständigen*' ('standing', 'fixed', 'enduring') as 'perduring'; and '*mächtiger*' ('powerful', 'potent', 'mighty') as 'puissant'.²⁸ In making these choices, Krell is clearly following Heidegger's call for a poetizing translation of philosophical texts, yet the poeticisms tend to be linked to early modern English literature, to the work of Sidney, Shakespeare and Milton, among others. This is most obvious when Krell translates '*aus den Fugen*' as 'out of joint', in which Heidegger's concern with the disappearance of Being gets refracted through Hamlet's anxiety about the moral chaos of the Danish court: 'The time is out of joint', says Hamlet, 'O cursed spite/ That ever I was born to set it right!'²⁹ Krell's translation subtly links Heidegger's philosophy to canonical texts and

traditions in English, helping in some small degree to situate him in the English-language canon of foreign philosophies. Yet this literary allusiveness questions Heidegger's belief that poetizing translation is somehow more 'faithful' to early Greek philosophy because 'its terms are words which speak from the language of the matter itself'.³⁰ On the contrary, Krell's version shows that translation, even when it experiments to preserve the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text, is likely to contain anachronisms, deviations and excesses, because it releases a domestic remainder. Krell's archaisms communicate Heidegger's philosophical theme and imitate his peculiar style, but they suggest that the ancient Greek experience of Being isn't disclosed but displaced in translation; that it can never be more than the historical variations of the translating language, and these can only be glimpsed when contemporary linguistic practices are disrupted.³¹

The translation of philosophical texts can be improved, and the issue of translation productively introduced in philosophical interpretation, if translators take a more experimental approach to their work. Current translation practices show that translators' prefaces, glossaries and annotations are helpful in clarifying the conceptual density of key terms and in indicating their foreignness among domestic philosophical trends. But any such apparatus can only gesture at the effects of the remainder, its literary and historical resonances in the target language and the metacommentary they make possible. This means that philosophical translation must become more literary so as to release an appropriate domestic remainder for foreign concepts and discourses. However unpredictable the remainder may ultimately be, it nonetheless requires translators to respond creatively to the stylistic pressures exerted by the philosophical project of concept formation.

Deleuze and Guattari have remarked on the 'element of style' in philosophical writing:

some concepts must be indicated by an extraordinary and sometimes even barbarous or shocking word, whereas others make do with an ordinary, everyday word that is filled with harmonics so distant that it risks being imperceptible to a non-philosophical ear. Some concepts call for archaisms, and other for neologisms, shot through with almost crazy etymological exercises ... The concept's baptism calls for a specifically philosophical *taste* that proceeds with violence or by insinuation and constitutes a philosophical language within language – not just a vocabulary but a syntax that attains the sublime or a great beauty.³²

By developing a philosophical language, then, the philosopher faces a choice between maintaining or varying the major language – that is, the standard dialect, the philosophical canon, the dominant concepts and discourses. The taste that the philosopher exercises is not simply literary, but social, having some bearing upon institutional limits: a style of philosophical writing may insinuate itself among or violate the philosophies that currently hold sway in the discipline, adhering to the major language or admitting the minor linguistic forms that it excludes (e.g. the 'shocking word', archaism, neologism) and thus creating what Deleuze and Guattari elsewhere call a minor literature.³³ A stylistic innovation in a philosophical text might indeed be too esoteric, too discipline-bound, for the 'nonphilosophical ear'; yet if it is drawn from minor forms, from linguistic and literary traditions that deviate from the dominant philosophical discourses, then it might indeed reach non-specialist readers. If philosophy is practised as a minor literature, it marks and crosses the current limits of the academic institution.

For the translator, a more literary approach turns the philosophical translation into a minor literature within the literature of philosophy. The experimental translation is minoritizing: it creates a philosophical language that challenges the domestic hierarchy of philosophical languages. The translation that in contrast avoids stylistic innovation will have an insinuating impact on the domestic discipline, assimilating the foreign text to the standard dialect, the dominant philosophies, the prevailing interpretations. Only the experimental translation can signify the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text by deterritorializing the major language and opening the institution to new concepts and discourses. By taking account of translation, philosophy doesn't come to an end, doesn't become poetry or history, but expands to embrace other kinds of thinking and writing.

Notes

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