

Notes on Translation and Untranslatability in Philosophy and Culture (Russia and Europe)

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Translation is a business that has always been and will always be needed in this world as long as there are commerce and diplomacy, science and literature, philosophy and everyday life issues, in short – the need for communication between people of different languages and different cultures. Today, however, translation is more than a technical support for human contacts. We no longer see it as a mere intermediary in exchanges between languages and cultures. It has acquired a new and much more important status, serving as a key prerequisite for cognition in the humanities and social sciences. Moreover, translation has become a philosophical issue and even a philosophical category (philosophical categories are not eternal, they can change). A number of cultural-historical and methodological considerations can be adduced to bolster this point (Avtonomova 2008; 2016). On the historical-philosophical level, translation can be seen as the latest form of problematizing language: after mind thinking itself has been superseded by language as the main issue of philosophy, several stages of what was called ‘the linguistic turn’ followed: understanding, dialogue, communication, and now translation (and, consequently, untranslatability) came successively to the fore. On the operational and methodological level, translation became a kind of paradigm – a model of an approach that is essential to the most diverse fields of research in the humanities.

Translation in a Narrow and in a Broad Sense

Reflecting on the fate and possibilities of translation in knowledge production, in culture and in life, we inevitably face the necessity to distinguish between different meanings of the very notion of translation. Translation in its narrow and proper sense is translation between different languages; it is the one that lends itself most easily to operationalization and provides an illustrative model of what is done in other areas of knowledge and culture production. Translation in a broad sense comprises many things including periphrasis (intralingual translation) or inter-semiotic translation, i.e. one between different communicative systems (for example, from novel to film). These are types of translation Roman Jakobson singled out in his famous work (Jakobson 233). There is, however, an even broader range of translation issues including ones of translating not from one linguistic (semiotic, discourse) system into another, but from a non-verbal experience into an articulated one. The possibility of such translations attracted the attention of Yuri Lotman, who analyzed the functioning of culture as memory (“...placing a fact into the collective memory bears all signs of translation from one language into another, in this case – to the ‘language of culture’”, cf. Lotman 329). Translation in a broad sense is also translation between concepts. This is what Thomas Kuhn resorted to in his search for a way out of the deadlock caused by incommensurability of theories (Kuhn, *Postscript–1969*. Section 5). This play of perspectives in our understanding of translation must be kept in mind at all times, although it is, of course, translation in the proper sense that shall serve as the conceptual anchor in this paper.

Translation issues are extremely topical these days, and the awareness of this is growing both in Russia and in the West, where it is associated with shifting boundaries, including linguistic ones, with reassessment of cultural, economic and political values, and with the expansion of international interactions. In post-Soviet Russia, along with the same universal issues and interests, there seems to be a particularly acute need to construct (or to “re-create”) a Russian conceptual language, without which thought cannot be articulate and effective. Translation plays a very important role in this work.

Since the beginning of the post-Soviet transition in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Russian philosophers have been acutely aware of the need to overcome conceptual deficits that had accrued during the decades of isolation from contemporary Western thought as well as from Russian philosophical heritage (religious and not only). At the same time, mastering foreign conceptual experience and mastering domestic historical experience are enterprises that require deciphering conceptual languages unfamiliar to Russian thinkers of today. They face a double cultural translation task. In the early 1990s, access to international information was still scarce, and the Russian conceptual language was far from being mature and complete. It was clearly unsuitable for articulating new life and cognitive experiences. In some respects, however, the post-Soviet period, peculiar as it is, is not really unique. Extremely simplifying history and leaving aside its subtle twists and turns, we can outline several more periods of Russia’s opening to the West and, accordingly, of intensive translation work which was made necessary each time by the evolution of Russian society and culture. These periods are, roughly, the post-Petrine time in the 18th century, the post-Napoleonic time in the 19th century, and a short time before and after the 1917 revolution in the 20th century. They all bear a specific similarity with the post-Soviet period.

On Translation in Russian History

In the era that began after Peter the Great had “opened a window on Europe”, Vasily Trediakovsky (1703–1768) and Antiochus Kantemir (1708–1744) were remarkable translators who, in the process of translation, developed a Russian conceptual language. In one of his programmatic works (Trediakovsky 481–561) Trediakovsky criticizes the “enemies of wisdom” (above all Jean-Jacques Rousseau) and asserts intellectual activity (*umstvovanie*) as the main positive quality of the human race. In order to strengthen and develop the mental ability in his fellow citizens, he works carefully and systematically on the creation of a Russian philosophical language. In this treatise, he seeks and/or invents Russian equivalents for a number of basic concepts of European philosophy, consistently citing their Latin, and – towards the end of the text – French prototypes in the footnotes. Among those cited by Trediakovsky are, for example, Russian equivalents of such fundamental Latin and modern European notions as *existentia* (*bytnost’*), *substantia* (*sushchestvo*), *essentia* (*sushchnost’*), *mens* (*um*), *intellectus purus* (*razum*), *intelligentia* (*razumnost’*), *sensatio* (*chuvstvennost’*), *experientia* (*upotreblenie*) and others.

The second epoch during which the shortcomings of Russian conceptual language were realized and addressed, was the post-Napoleonic time associated with the names of such writers and thinkers as Alexander Pushkin, Pyotr Vyazemsky, and Pyotr Chaadayev. Alongside with writing prose and poetry, all of them translated from Western European languages. In a letter of July 13, 1825, Pushkin wrote to Vyazemsky: “Sooner or later it ought be said aloud that our Russian metaphysical language is still in a wild state. God willing, it will someday develop to resemble the French (a clear and exact language of prose, i.e., the language of thought). I have three verses about this in *Onegin*” (Pushkin, vol. 10, 120). Of course, the word “metaphysical” here denotes a general language of concepts, not a section of philosophy. However, Pushkin notes a general lack of notions in sciences and in philosophy: “... science, politics and philosophy have not been explicated

in Russian yet – we do not have any metaphysical language at all, even in casual correspondence we have to create new phrases to explicate the most ordinary notions” (Pushkin, vol. 7, 14). The conceptual language kept developing after Pushkin, but much more slowly than he had wanted it to.

The next formative time period was the beginning of the 20th century. Prior to the 1917 revolution, some of Husserl’s and the neo-Kantians’ works were translated into Russian, and some of Freud’s works were published in Russia even earlier than in Western Europe. On the fate of psychoanalysis in Russia and the translation issues arising in this connection, see our article published in a special issue on translation and psychoanalysis (Avtonomova 2002a, 175–186). Orientation toward the West continued in the 1920s due to the hope of a global revolution and the necessity to “learn from bourgeois experts”. Intense as this exchange was, however, the predominance of Marxist concepts (across the spectrum from creative to dogmatic use of them) soon began to hinder work with the concepts of other philosophical doctrines.

As a consequence, the goal of developing a conceptual language could not even be set, since the Marxist language was being presented more and more as something unchangeable and universally applicable. In the Soviet time, works by ancient thinkers, by the “forerunners of Marxism” (mainly French socialists and German classical philosophers), and by many modern philosophers were translated into Russian. But products of 20th century Western philosophical thought were accessible only to few scholars specializing in “criticism of modern bourgeois philosophy.” Very few translations in this field were published, and every such publication was a milestone.

As I have already noted, apart from opening to the pre-revolutionary and émigré Russian heritage, the post-Soviet time saw a new opening to the West. In general, the bulk of literature in the humanities and social sciences was translated from English, except in philosophy, where translations of contemporary French authors’ works led the way for a number of years. Anglo-American analytic empiricism never had too many admirers in Russia, and German thought discouraged Russian readers with its pronounced systematicity and strong neo-Marxist tradition to which the post-Soviet readers were allergic. It was in contemporary French philosophy that they seemed to find what they were looking for: a generalized critical pathos, a vivid style, and genre diversity. However, many failures and misunderstandings occurred as ideas of French philosophers were being translated from one culture to another.

It was French philosophy of the 1960s and 1970s that enjoyed – at least in the beginning – the greatest popularity with Russian translators and readers. It had its history in France, but it had no history in Russia. In France, this philosophy was about criticism of the European rationalist tradition, criticism of the subjectivist philosophies that preceded it, above all of existentialism, and, in the end, criticism of the 1960s’ structuralism itself. For unprepared Russian readers, these different French criticisms merged into a single nihilistic protest. The stylistic complexity and sophistication of French philosophical writing (which probably was, among other things, a reaction to strong academism and to the dogmatism of rigid interdisciplinary boundaries) was perceived in Russia as a characteristic feature of the new philosophy par excellence. At that, the overall landscape of French philosophical thought, which was actually quite diverse, remained invisible to Russian readers. Thus, the conceptual content of French philosophy was perceived in Russia primarily as a spirit of generalized criticality and aesthetic breakthroughs. While in the West Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze, Lacan, Lyotard, and many other French thinkers had already made their way into the university curricula, Russia lacked (and sometimes still lacks) basic reference handbooks or companions that are necessary for studying their works. The publishing and reception history of each of these authors deserves a separate study.

Facing the Untranslatable in Personal Translation Experience – Soviet and Post-Soviet

In what follows, I am going to focus primarily on the experience of translating from other languages into Russian and using Western concepts for making an up-to-date Russian philosophical language. It is in this field that I myself have been active translating and introducing works by French philosophical and human scientific thought into Soviet and post-Soviet Russian culture. My experience has shown that in addition to certain specific difficulties of linguistic, cultural, and historical nature, translators often encountered social or ideological obstacles and untranslatability issues which they attempted to overcome with varying degrees of success.

The fact that a Russian translation of Michel Foucault's *The Order of Things* (Foucault 1977; 1994) was published in Brezhnev's Soviet Union was a true Soviet miracle, given that the book contained, among other things, unflattering statements concerning Marxism. Despite the restrictive markings "For scholarly libraries only," its 5,000 copies became available to a fairly wide circle of Russian-speaking readers, who received the book with great interest and enthusiasm. But miracles don't happen often: publishing Russian translations of Foucault's other books became possible only some fifteen to twenty years later, in the post-Soviet time (Avtonomova, 2019).

Another bright moment in my translation practice was the encounter with a kind of *ideological untranslatability* that, unlike Foucault's book, could not be overcome during the Soviet period. I was confronted with it while translating a book on the history of psychotherapeutic doctrines written by Léon Chertok (a French psychiatrist and specialist in hypnosis) and Raymond de Saussure (a Swiss psychoanalyst, once president of the Swiss Psychoanalytic Association). Its Russian edition was to be entitled *The Birth of the Psychoanalyst* (Shertok, Sossior de). The book was not even about psychoanalysis itself but about the psychotherapeutic practices that preceded it. I translated it shortly after the Tbilisi Symposium on the Unconscious (1979) which rehabilitated, in a sense, the very idea of the unconscious which had been ostracized for decades from Soviet psychology since the 1930s when Freudianism was banned in the USSR. Psychoanalysis was still prohibited as of the late 1970s. Therefore, the mere word 'psychoanalyst' in the title of a book was enough to make it unfit for publication in the Soviet Union, despite Léon Chertok's willingness to change the title to, say, *The Odyssey of Psychotherapy*. After I finished the translation, the Progress Publishing House took another ten years to publish it, and it was not until after the collapse of the Soviet regime in 1991 that the book was out!

Due to the long hiatus in the Soviet/Russian research and practice of psychoanalysis, I was bound to encounter *terminological* untranslatability issues in my next work, and that was a translation of one of the best European dictionaries of classical Freudianism, the one compiled by Laplanche and Pontalis (Laplanche, Pontalis 1967; Laplanche, Pontalis, 1996; 2010; 2016). No wonder, since almost 60 years of psychoanalytic practice and usage of psychoanalytic concepts had dropped out. The Russian translations of books on psychoanalysis that had been published in Russia and abroad in the meantime could do little to help. 350 notions had to be translated, some of them – anew, preserving as much as possible the word families and taking into account the experience of psychoanalytic conceptualization in other languages and cultures (the dictionary features concepts in German, English, French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, and Russian). While translating the dictionary, a good Russian equivalent for a key Freudian term such as *Besetzung* was prompted to me, if I may say so, by the Romanic languages. *Besetzung* is translated as *carga* in Spanish and Portuguese, or *carica* in Italian, which led me to opt for the Russian word *nagruzka*. It is in keeping with Freud's "energetic" concept of psyche and, importantly, allows forming concepts close in meaning (*razgruzka*, *protivonagruzka*, *sverkhmagruzka*,

etc.) just like the German words and expressions *Entziehung der Besetzung*, *Gegenbesetzung*, *Überbesetzung*, etc. do. As far as I know, neither other Russian translations nor French ones preserved this conceptual unity. As for the French and English translations of *Besetzung* (*investissment* and *cathexis*, respectively), they are sometimes found in Russian texts as “investitsiia” and “kateksis,” but they have almost lost the semantic connection between them and certainly are not perceived any longer as translations of the same German term. Reasons for my opting for some term or another are elaborated on in my preface to the first edition of the Dictionary as well as in the preface and afterword to its revised second edition.

Finally, here is an example of yet another kind of untranslatability, a one that I would call *conceptual and stylistic*. In translating Jacques Derrida’s *Of Grammatology* (Derrida; on the reception of *Of Grammatology* see Avtonomova 2002: 85–92; 2004: 400–404), the main difficulty I encountered was the impossibility of simultaneously and fully reproducing both the framework of basic concepts and the author’s ‘postmodern’-style playing with word consonances. I opted for the former, because I realized that it would be impossible to translate everything with an equal measure of precision. My choice is polemical, knowing other Russian translations of Derrida which could be described as *imitative*, i.e. imitating the author’s style, or *intuitive*, i.e. hiding from the reader the reasons for the translator’s choice of concepts and terms. I prioritized the choice of equivalents and tried primarily to keep the chosen ones throughout the text so as to make them recognizable to the reader and to preserve the lines of thought they served. I translated *différance*, Derrida’s most famous concept, as *razlichanie*, while other translators use such words as *razlichenie*, *otkladyvanie*, *otlozhenie*, sometimes using different words in different contexts. The dictionary word *différence* differs from Derrida’s neo-graphism *différance* by ‘just’ one letter that is visible to the eye but imperceptible to the ear (*différance* is pronounced the same way as *différence*). The distinction between *différence* and *différance* is inaudible. The inaudible letter ‘a’ in *différance* makes the word “erroneous,” constantly breaking out of the system, emphasizing the distinction of difference as the opposite of identity. Moreover, the letter ‘a’ in *razlichanie* (as opposed to the normative *razlichenie*) is associated with the imperfect form of the Russian verb and suggests an ongoing action of distinguishing. *Razlichanie*, one might say, removes the metaphysical distinction between writing and speaking, which would favor speech – the voice, the logos, the fullness of presence.

Last year, a special issue of the electronic journal ITER was published, prepared by an international group of French-speaking philosophers under the slogan “Translate Derrida” (ITER). My article *Deconstruction and Translation: on the Reception of Derrida in Russia* (Avtonomova 2020) was published there too – among other articles which analyzed reception and translation of Derrida’s work in Bulgarian, Czech, Polish, Spanish, Japanese, Chinese, Turkish, English and other languages. This issue of the journal, dedicated to the memory of Marguerite Derrida, also includes two hitherto unpublished texts by Jacques Derrida on translation. One cannot fail to recognize the usefulness of such international work: it is important for translators to compare the types of difficulties they encounter and to share their experiences concerning difficult cases of conceptual translation. I would like to mention here another new collective work – a volume edited by David M. Spitzer, containing my article on translation and untranslatability (Avtonomova, 2020a); this book (Spitzer) with its broad international team of contributors requires a separate in-depth discussion.

The peculiarity of my approach in all these cases is the emphasis on the terminological and epistemological aspect. Of all the general linguistic, sociological, and cultural

anthropological approaches to translation, I am most interested in the ones that view translation as cognition and cognition as translation. Thus, rather than prioritizing prose or poetry translation (this topic involves special discussion of aesthetic criteria for the quality of translation work, which I am not going into now), I focus on translation in the fields of philosophy, social sciences and humanities. I think that an epistemological approach to translation allows us to absorb and take into account a maximum of the practice experience and reflection. Of course, intuition, ingenuity, and personal involvement always pertain to translation as a practice, but here I would like to emphasize the cognitive, discursive, intersubjectively meaningful aspects of translation which I see primarily as a helper to working thought, a reflexive resource that allows us to understand by analogy other mechanisms of scientific cognition. Derrida once said writing is everywhere. I say translation is everywhere, although I cannot agree with the thesis that there are no originals. Analysis of translation mechanisms often reveals something that is not usually seen in other forms and kinds of cognition: namely, how different layers and fragments of experience move from the sphere of the implicit and unexpressed to the sphere of what is accessible to operationalization and intersubjective verification.

The Aporias of Translation

Translating means, above all, going through trials of many different kinds. Trials of scholarly and linguistic nature are undergone by the original text, by the translator's language, and by translators themselves, who are accountable to their two masters – the source language and their own mother tongue – who may be placing different demands on them. How to get out of this aporia? The difficulty is that it is impossible to love everything equally, and if you cherish a little bit of the original and a little bit of your mother tongue, it leads nowhere good. This can be called Schleiermacher's aporia, because it was he who first noticed (and problematized) that there are two fundamentally different ways of translating: bringing the author closer to the reader and bringing the reader closer to the author. A conscious choice must be made between the two lest the original and the target language miss each other altogether. This, however, is not a deadlocked antinomy but a productive aporia which encourages movement, according to Derrida. Antoine Berman uses the terms *langue de départ* (departure language) and *langue d'arrivée* (destination language), thus introducing a journey metaphor – very appropriate here – into translation terminology. This problem is always solved one way or another based on the respective context, depending on how the translators understand their task, but these solutions should always be presented to the reader.

To understand how Schleiermacher's antinomy is resolved in the history of cultures and in the practice of translation, one can look at examples of repeated translations of significant texts done in different times. The first translations are usually made in order to acquaint readers with new contents and therefore emphasize the 'reader pole' to the detriment of the 'original pole', while subsequent translations pay more attention to the texture of the original and its signifying structure, trying to more fully implement what Antoine Berman called the "testing by a foreign land" (Berman 25). Both approaches, as Mikhail Gasparov has emphasized, have their own cultural tasks which correspond to more general and time-specific needs of the development of society and its enlightenment. "In this process, there are alternating phases of spreading culture outward and depthward. 'Spreading outward' means that culture takes hold of a new stratum of society rapidly but superficially, in simplified forms, as general familiarizing rather than internal assimilation, as a learned norm rather than creative transformation. 'Spreading depthward' means that the circle of bearers of culture does not change noticeably, but their familiarity with culture becomes deeper, its acquisition more creative, and its manifestations more complex"

(Gasparov 128–129). This dynamic is clearly seen in translations of fiction, but it can also be observed in repeated translations of philosophical, psychoanalytic, and scholarly texts.

Recognition of Untranslatability and Elucidation of Blind Spots

To be sure, the untranslatability discussion does not arise out of thin air: untranslatability phenomena surround us and penetrate various aspects of our existence. We have different conditions of life, our languages are not interchangeable, they do not overlap. Their sound matter (the signifying side) differs, and they structure reality in different ways. To show this, we do not even need to turn to exotic languages. For example, the coexistence of English and French in bilingual Canada sometimes causes big problems: for example, in the field of law, the coexistence of English case law and French law (the Napoleonic Code), each with its own terms anchored in the respective language, makes legal terminological interaction very difficult. But we do not even have to delve into special areas of translation practice. We can confine ourselves to the everyday semantic and morphological incongruity between certain phenomena of English and French. For example, translating English gerunds into French produces a ‘black-and-white error’. If we translate *doing smth means... as le fait que... signifie que...*, it leads to *doing* (which is a process not fact) being translated as a fact, distorting its meaning. Here is another example: in Greek or Latin the verb *to be* is both a copula and an indication of the subject’s existence (indeed, in Greek this verb has not two, but a dozen meanings), and therefore its translation truncates its meaning when a text is translated into languages like Russian where this verb is not used as an obligatory copula. Hence the Latin sentence *Deus bonus est ergo Deus est* (by which the very *existence* of God is deduced from the premise that God is good) cannot be used for reasoning in Russian, because in Russian the existence of God is not grammatically deducible from His goodness. But does absolute untranslatability follow from this fact and others of the kind? Rather, they may be taken to remind us how complicated a business translating is, but not to the extent of making untranslatability our ideology. Emphasizing untranslatability, which is a widespread attitude nowadays, is hardly productive: why bother if our efforts are doomed to failure anyway?

No method exists that could help us avoid mistakes once and for all. Mistakes happen anyway. Moreover, some of them are productive (what kind of mistakes is productive under which circumstances is a separate question). Translation is always a risk, but also a chance. No risk – no chance. No translation captures everything that is in the original, and therefore any culture, especially a dynamic one, needs different translations. Which is not to say, however, that all translations are equally important, nor that ‘anything goes’. Any translation is commensurate with the original in one way or another. This is an important point to make, because too often these days we hear that there are no originals around, only translations of translations. How the relationship between the translation and the original is constructed is sometimes a very difficult question, but – both in principle and in practice – it *is* quite solvable. Though there can be no single canonical translation of any text (including sacred ones) for all time, this is not a cause for frustration but a chance to see the meeting with the Other in the process of translation as a difficult work that requires overcoming our own linguistic and our cultural habits that we take for granted.

Since we all speak different languages, it is our human (not just philological) task to “learn others’ languages” and to build up the steps of understanding. This can only be done through translation. In modern and contemporary Europe (and not only Europe), the intensity of translation practices acts as an indicator and criterion of cultures’ openness, up-to-dateness and modernity. A number of studies based on historical parallels show that the future belongs to cultures that translate a lot, sparing no effort and time to assimilate other peoples’ experience. When seen under this angle, the fate of global languages that

do not translate much, satisfied with the fact that much is being translated from them into other languages, may become problematic in a more or less near future, as has already happened many times in history. One example is the cultural history of Arabic being a target language, then a source language, and then a language that wound up beyond intense translation exchange (Calvet 45–56). For an interesting perspective on the specificity of Muslim culture which was the first to practice an active reception of the European antiquity through translation, see the book by Rémi Brague (Brague).

Alongside the pointillist or, on the contrary, globalist works on translation, fundamental works have appeared in Europe in the last two decades that take stock of overall and working conceptual vocabularies of the main European languages. I would like to mention first of all the European *Dictionary of Untranslatables* edited by Barbara Cassin (Cassin) which summarizes a great amount of research comparing the main bodies of philosophical concepts in European languages, revealing many blind spots to do with untranslatability or discrepancies between languages, cultures, and ways of articulating the inner and outer world phenomena. This huge dictionary is currently being translated into a number of European languages, and Barbara Cassin considers the comparison of the resulting translations at the meta-meta-level to be the next stage of her work. Another interesting case is the transnational project called Iberconceptos, a dictionary of Spanish sociopolitical terms of the 18th and 19th centuries that covers Spain and the Spanish-speaking countries of Latin America (Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Peru, Venezuela) as well as Portugal and Brazil, according to the proud report in *Hermes*, a journal that has been published for 30 years by the French National Center for Scientific Research (Goldman 2007). Though the existence of great translation difficulties in both cases is obvious, these two projects may be said to productively relativize the idea of untranslatability. Thus, according to Barbara Cassin, all ‘untranslatability’ means is that we translate a word or concept over and over again without being satisfied with the results and without giving up further attempts to come up with a more adequate translation. In any case, such initiatives limit the area of the untranslatable and help us seek greater harmony between verbal modes of expression in different languages.

As I have said on many occasions before, the dictionary edited by Barbara Cassin poses a challenge to Russian translators since it features a number of Russian philosophical or general worldview concepts, especially specific and exotic ones (such as *Bogochelovek*, *sobornost*, *mir*, *obshchina*, *pravda/istina*, etc.). It would be good if in subsequent European editions of the dictionary – which is subject to upgrading and supplementing – speakers of the Russian conceptual language could advance both in self-understanding and in fitting themselves into the problem field of European philosophies – and I mean not only its exotic corner. Contemporary Ukrainian researchers, who happened to be the ones to write the articles on Russian philosophy and Russian-language concepts, are currently busy translating this French-language dictionary into Ukrainian. Regardless of their personal motivations, their courage in translating this work deserves credit, since they cannot fall back on any tradition of translating philosophical classics into Ukrainian (for lack thereof). Their work can therefore be considered a national project of great importance. I avail myself of the opportunity to point out the expediency of translating this dictionary into Russian and elaborating on the issues it reflects. This would mean enlarging the pool of Russian philosophical notions and reflecting upon their relationships with the corresponding notions of other European languages.

The late Paul Ricœur was among those who combated the idea of untranslatability and, consequently, the idea of incompatible “linguistic worlds.” If we consider translation to be theoretically impossible and languages and texts to be a priori untranslatable into each other, how on Earth can we explain all the real and meaningful human contacts that have

taken place throughout the millennia? Ricœur prefers to regard translation as actually existing in order to then pose the question of its possibility, like Kant who is known to have started off with stating the existence of the sciences in order to then pose the question of how they were possible, once they were in place. As we know, translating poetry is particularly difficult. But translating philosophy is very difficult too: the semantic fields of word-concepts do not overlap, the main philosophical words (*Grundwörter, maître-mots*), such as *Aufhebung, Dasein, Vorstellung, Ereignis* (the fact that Ricœur quotes German philosophical concepts is probably explained with philosophers' hard-to-remove piety towards "the Greek and the German") are different in different languages and have different cultural and conceptual connotations. But these words must be translated if philosophy is to exist as a common cause. A philosopher takes the equivalence (or adequacy) of a translation not for granted, but as a task: cultural affinity is produced by translation rather than assumed by it (Ricœur 63). Ultimately – and this is the key point of Ricœur's conception of translation – translation does not begin with the commensurable and the comparable: instead, it constructs itself a space of intelligibility between languages and cultures. Apart from translation issues, this process of constructing the commensurable is considered by Marcel Detienne (Detienne), on whom Ricœur relies. In the construction of comparable worlds lies the great role of translation in culture.

In Lieu of a Conclusion

The ability to translate is the most important human asset. Although historically its realization has not always resembled diligent translating from one language to another, and translations may have had other aims (for example, to elevate one's own cultural patterns), in our time it can claim to be a kind of non-substantive model of relating to the Other or Others. In turn, understanding the role of translation as an operational model of human behavior in life and cognitive attitude to the world requires a revision of the entire curriculum in the humanities. At the same time, the emphasis on translation leads to a restructuring of the entire fabric of concepts related to cognition in the humanities. At least, language and culture appear as processes and relationships rather than substances. In everyday life as well as in research work, we need to cultivate and develop our linguistic and translational capacities, both in understanding others' speech and in speaking to others. This is related not to the destiny of Europe as a substance or as an original treasure trove of experience (however rich that experience may be) but to the idea of culture as a goal and Europeanization as a quest for a new relationship with the rest of the world.

The French linguist Claude Hagège once remarked that "the Europe of languages has a destiny of its own, and should not look to foreign models for inspiration. The domination of a single language, such as English, cannot help fulfill this destiny. Only a permanent opening onto multiplicity will." And he added: "Such is for Europe the call of the past and the call of the future." Umberto Eco affirmed that "the language of Europe is translation." Of course, this does not mean that we should become polyglots and learn to read all the languages of the world, but, when reflecting on any philosophical subject, it would be extremely useful and sometimes even necessary to keep in mind the problem of translating, or transferring our ideas and their articulations into other languages. In the development of this linguistic and translation ability lies the chance for a future in a globalized world, a future for Europe and a future for Russia with all that is European in it.

As already mentioned, translation (which always, in one way or another, works with the experience of diversity and multiplicity of languages) is not only a mediator in intercultural and interlingual exchange, but also a *conditio sine qua non* for any kind of cognition in the humanities and social sciences. This is due to the fact that translation acts as an operational scheme underlying all processes related to language communication,

including dialogue: this is what makes it an additional reflexive resource, a new possibility and a precondition of understanding (Avtonomova, 2008; 2016). Translation aims at going beyond and transcending boundaries. It is invariably involved in negotiations between the familiar and the unfamiliar, the own and the foreign. Translation confronts us with the paradox of fundamentality of the non-fundamental. Thus, what is fundamental in translation is not substrata and substances but shifts, displacements and translocations of thought contents. Such non-substantialist translation becomes a philosophical category which has its effect on the meaning and functioning of other categories, pushing them towards non-substantiality and dynamism. Translation in the dynamic of its relationships with untranslatability (surmountable and insurmountable) acts as a stimulus and a precondition for the development of thought. It does not abolish other issues and other categories, but allows us to more effectively discuss them, to sharpen them, and to advance them. This is evident, for example, in the relations that exist today between translation and interpretation, translation and understanding, translation and analytical thought, translation and dialogue.

Thus, the following paradox emerges: translation and translation studies are a sphere of the relative, the cultural-historical. But at the same time, it turns out that "...translation gives us *new chances of approaching the universal, but a one sought for, not a predetermined one*. It is partly achieved in the process of constant expansion of the intelligible space. <...> The commonality between radically different languages and cultures can be found in the very ability to move from one form of intelligibility to another: such moves result in multiple reconfiguration, recategorization of thought and eventually a common sphere of intelligibility is outlined" (Avtonomova 2008, 488, 494).

Thus the issue of translation and untranslatability becomes more than an issue in a specific discipline or in science in general. It acquires a philosophical status. This is due to contemporary philosophy's new attention to the issue of language and communicative mechanisms in general; to the realization of epistemological specificity of translation as a research subject and a practice; to the identification of general patterns of intercultural knowledge production on the basis of the history of translation; to the opening possibility to treat translation as a universal mechanism of human consciousness – perhaps more accessible to operationalization than "dialogue".

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