

Introduction

About Translation and Interpretation

On the 10th and 11th of November the Centre of Hermeneutics, Phenomenology and Practical Philosophy of The University “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” of Iași organized the National Colloquium entitled *Translation and Interpretation*. This academic event has for now an uninterrupted tradition, and this year the Colloquium reached its 8th edition.

What could justify the organization of a colloquium about translation and interpretation nowadays? This question is very simple, but, at the same time, one may not easily find a satisfying answer. I tend to believe that the arguments may be found by acknowledging the evident context in which both aspects (translation and interpretation) are being regarded as essential components, not only of certain areas such as Philosophy, Theology, Linguistics or any other, but of our everyday lives, because they are to be found in people’s lives as long as they are trying to understand situations, contexts, and aspects of their lives. In order to succeed in their endeavours, it is necessary that human beings would translate the respective situations of their lives into their own individual language.

Even if as a strictly methodological procedure, translation and interpretation are being analysed, as a general rule, separately. Actually, they have a common destination, not knowing all the time which one precedes the other. Evidence enables us to state that interpretation assumes the act of translation as being preliminary and we all agree that we cannot interpret a text of philosophy from ancient Greece, for example, if we do not know ancient Greek language. For those that do not know this language, translation asserts itself as a necessity in order to understand something from that text. On the other side, we cannot make a certain translation by absolving us from the preliminary data. No matter how hard we try, when we translate a text, we cannot isolate the tradition, the culture to which we belong. Not only is the act of translation influenced by our culture and presuppositions, may it be consciously or not, but our everyday life is also being guided by these preliminary data. The presuppositions theorized by R.G. Collingwood and H.-G. Gadamer among others precede any form of translation.

Some of the papers presented at the colloquium held in Iași on the 10th and 11th of November have emphasized the fact that from the (mis)interpretation of the sacred texts to the translation of the official documents of the European Union, the art of interpretation has passed

through diverse records: from interpretation *techniques* that initially regarded self-edification to *doctrines* of interpretation, like the doctrine of the four senses of the Scripture. Regardless of the aspect that we acknowledge this fact or not, translation and interpretation entwine in an inextricable way with our everyday life. From Nietzsche's *Will to Power* we understand that "facts do not exist; only interpretations exist". All the more so as we may affirm that, the act of translation is nothing else than an interpretation! And each act of our life, as it assumes a relationship regarding things, people or ourselves. Any relationship that implies understanding may be seen as an act of translation.

The first time a translation appeared may be identified exactly, along with the diversity of languages and culture. After Babel, the situation that we have to assume is excellently related by Walter Benjamin's expression: "the labour of the translator". Ever since, unilateral or bilateral, an exchange of information and senses existed between different cultures or generations that belong to the same tradition. The transfer of knowledge (*translatio studiorum*) has been done, especially, from a cultural space to another through translations and in the context of the same tradition this happened through the means of successive interpretations (in most of the times, concurrent ones). The reinterpretations of a text may be assimilated to successive translations, forasmuch as the diverse ways of applying the text in different life situations (judicial, social, cultural or spiritual) are also operations of translation. The critical distance between present and past, like the fusion of horizons (H.-G. Gadamer) shows us some important personalities that assume translation inside the one and same tradition that is, the assuming of history and its reiteration (M. Heidegger, H.-G. Gadamer), or that of memory and forgetting (P. Ricœur). Both present in different cultures, and inside of one single culture, the phenomenon of translation exists in a kind of dependency that regards an extensive „phenomenology of the alien" (B. Waldenfels). Some philosophers of the 20th century, such as Richard Rorty, have abandoned the interpretative paradigm considering that the texts should be used only for our own purposes. In other words, each of us makes a spontaneous free translation of the favourite texts in order to use them for one's own self-construction independent of their referring traditions.

Without any doubt, the phenomenon of translation involves some alternatives through which it may be adequately accepted: comparable *versus* incomparable (Marcel Détiénne), fidelity *versus* treason, translatable *versus* non-translatable (P. Ricœur). Far from offering any kind of solutions, these perspectives rather reveal the inherent difficulties of the art of translation. In order to reach for the details of this phenomenon, one should investigate the multiple problems that are to be found at the intersection of the philosophy of language and semiotics with phenomenology, hermeneutics,

cognitivism and many others. The perspectives of approaching the act of translation and of interpretation are surely diverse and this aspect has been fully emphasized by the participants at this Colloquium. The historical and systematically approaches, that do not belong only to philosophy, but to philology (to the science of translation), theology, political sciences, sciences of communication and many others have offered a more complex image of the themes that have been discussed.

The Faculty of Philosophy and Social-Political Sciences has hosted, at least in the latest years, many other academic events that have focused on the phenomenon of interpretation, but, according to my knowledge, translation has never represented a theme for debate until this year's Colloquium. I hope that the recent event dedicated to translation and interpretation will represent just the beginning of some debates in which the act of translation should find its well-deserved place. As an organizer of this Colloquium, I declare myself very satisfied with the quality of the papers proposed by the 35 participants. Almost every intervention has generated ample discussions, useful equally to the participants and to the attendees of this academic event.

In concluding this preface I wish to express my gratitude to Professor Petru Bejan (the Editor-in-chief of *Hermeneia. Journal of Hermeneutics, Art Theory and Criticism*) and to Professor George Bondor (the Scientific Director of the Centre of Hermeneutics, Phenomenology and Practical Philosophy, and the Editor-in-chief of the journal *Timpul* – the media partner of the event), who helped me very much in implementing the Colloquium in optimal conditions and also in publishing the texts presented by the participants at this academic event.

Guest Editor: *Florin CRĂȘMĂREANU*