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BODY AND SOUL, LETTER AND SENSE: PLATO'S RECEPTIONS IN TRANSLATION THEORY

Abstract. – This article delves into the concept of translation through a Platonic lens, focusing on the dichotomy between the copy and the original, as well as the relationship between the letter and the sense in translation. The primary objective of this text is to provide a concise overview of applications of Plato's metaphysics in the field of translation theory. It is important to note that many of these applications have been subject to substantial revision and criticism over time. Drawing on the work of theorists, the text discusses how Platonic ideas shape understandings of translation, particularly in the context of the sensual versus the rational, and the signifier versus the signified. Through this exploration, we revisit the old debate about meaning and translation, but we also reveal how Platonic thought provides a framework for understanding translation as a complex, dualistic process that involves both the preservation and transformation of meaning. The analysis of translation as a 'copy of a copy' further interrogates the nature of fidelity and originality in translated texts, challenging notions of translation as mere imitation and reflecting deeper philosophical questions about authenticity and representation. Plato's metaphysics prompts a re-evaluation of translation theory, moving beyond issues such as equivalence and linguistic transformations. It invites a philosophical inquiry into the nature of translation, emphasizing the creation of new, independent aesthetic objects rather than mere reproductions of original texts. This perspective challenges conventional notions and highlights the complex interplay between meaning, language, and translation.

Key words. – classical receptions, Plato, translation theory

Introduction

The distinctive originality of ancient Greek literature is often attributed to the lack of translation, and the absence of imitation, which is believed to be a key factor in determining the originality and authenticity of literature. Authenticity is tied to the fact that the authors of Ancient Greek literature were not constrained by the need to follow and emulate specific models or examples, which contributed to the unique character of their

literary works. The notion that all non-Greek languages (and cultures) were foreign and 'barbaric' has been advanced by numerous translation scholars as a rationale for the Greeks' disinclination towards translation as a human activity, and thus for their apparent lack of reflection on the act of translation. This cultural feature of ancient Greek society suggests that ancient Greek literature should be understood as original because it does not rely on translation. Although there is no evidence of the beginnings of theoretical thought in the field of translation along the lines of those in the Latin tradition (such as the ideas of Cicero or St. Jerome), some translation theorists as those mentioned below in the text turn to ancient Greek thinkers to build their translation models or to defend their views in the scientific field (although many of them have long been subject to revision and criticism), relying on the authority of classical authors.

Aspects of contemporary translation theory that are of interest include, on the one hand, the philosophical views of the ancient Greeks as a starting point for reflections on the nature and ethics of translation. Plato's philosophy and Aristotle's ethics are at the core of these inquiries. Contemporary translation scholars find in Plato's philosophy theoretical grounds for defining the concept of translation, while others find arguments in Aristotle's ethics for applying ethical principles to the field of interpretation. Conversely, at the nexus of linguistics and philosophy, the ancient Greek language itself, as the language of the origin of philosophy, emerges as a field for the unfolding of the debate on the nature of language, and hence on the nature of translation as a specific human activity.

The application of Platonism to the field of translation studies mirrors the development outlined above. The contrasts between the sensual and the real, the Ideas/Forms and the material world, the soul and the body, deepen translation theory with new horizons for understanding of the dichotomous nature of translation, including the similarities and differences between original and translated texts, as well as the identity and non-identity of these texts.[1] Plato's epistemology provides theory with insights into the distinction between signifier and signified, the essence of translation as a transfer of meaning, the nature of meaning itself as an object of transfer and transformation, the power of the word as a signifying construct, and the concepts of translatability and untranslatability.[2] Some of the above notions in translation theory are questioned by the cultural turn of the 1980s and later by poststructuralist thought (e.g. dichotomic thinking in translation studies, translation as meaning transfer, translated text as copy of the original), but Plato's philosophy has left its

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[1] Examples in Berman, 2007; Venuti, 2018.
[2] Martindale, 2008; Sallis, 2008; Meschonnic, 2011; Florentsen, 1994; Derrida, 1968, 1972.

marks and has influenced the conceptualization and understanding of translation.

It is somewhat paradoxical that, despite the copy-original dichotomy and the mimetic conception of translation, the general concept of free translation emerges in the foreground in the various uses of Plato's concepts. Plato serves as an apt illustration for the proposition that translators are free to deviate from the original text in order to convey the meaning and spirit of the source text in a target language that is both readable and fluent. This approach avoids the pitfalls of translation that result from the imposition of foreign linguistic conventions.

Anthony Pym delineates three rationales to integrating philosophical discourse into the field of translation studies:

1. Philosophers of various kinds have used translation as a case study or metaphor for issues of more general application.

2. Translation theorists and practitioners have referred to philosophical discourses for support and authority for their ideas.

3. Philosophers, scholars and translators have commented on the translation of philosophical discourses.[3]

Plato can be considered to fall within the field of view and thematic discussion circle of the second and third types of researchers, but not of the first, since translation does not find a place in Greek philosophical discourse and Plato himself does not pay special attention to translation. This fact is attributed to the deep ethnocentrism of the Greeks, who considered foreign languages to be "barbarous".[4] In this case, however, insofar as we are interested in pure, theoretical and general translation studies, we seek to determine his place and role among translation theorists, who rely much more on philosophy as an authority for theorising translation[5] than among philosophers of translation discourse. It is not surprising that Plato contributes to translation theory with the oppositions between the sensual and non-sensual, body and soul, words and things, referring to the conception of the copy and the original in translation.

Binarity of translation: copy and original

The concept of the word vs. sense dichotomy as articulated by St. Jerome is interpreted through the lens of Plato's metaphysics and situated within the context of Antoine Berman's reflections on translation. He identifies the origins of Cicero's and St. Jerome's principles of translation in ancient Greek thought, with a particular focus on Plato. However, he acknowledges that he is unaware of any direct references to translation in

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[3] Pym 2007: 24.
[4] Pym 2007: 25.
[5] Pym 2007: 33.

Plato's work. Yet, according to Berman, it is Plato who "introduced the famous rupture between the 'sensual' and the 'rational' principle, between the 'body' and the 'soul'".[6] These dichotomies are the foundation of his essay, "L'essence platonicienne de la traduction" (1987).

Berman's argument begins with the interconnection between translation and philosophy. In the act of translation, the language is transformed into speaking (langage). In transferring the text from one language to another, language is elevated to the level and the status of speaking (langage), which is the philosophical logos.[7] By defining translation as "la restitution du 'sens' comme l'idéalité du texte",[8] Berman situates translation within the framework of Platonism. As the soul must leave the body to reach Ideas, so translation detaches the signifier (corporeality) from the signified (meaning) in order to transfer it to the other/foreign language. Translation is transfer of the 'soul' (the sense) and tearing away of the 'body' (the letter). According to Berman, thanks to Platonism, the concept of language can be understood in a dual aspect, as both sensual and non-sensual, as sound and letter and sense and meaning.[9] Given that translation is inextricably linked to language, it necessarily acquires this specific duality. Translation disconnects the sense from its cover, thus allowing it to pass unhindered into other covers and into other languages. This makes the sense immutable, invariant and distant from all languages at the same time. It is "la structure 'platonicienne' du language" that makes the act of translation possible.[10]

In addition, Berman considers the clarity and the elegance of translation to be integral to the context of Platonism. This is because clarity is associated with sense that is purer than that of the original text, while elegance refers to the form and the formal aspects of language and text. The work to be translated is associated with Plato's Idea, and the translated text is characterised by the sensual, the similarity, the reflection, the double, the duplicate and the copy.

Although Berman's text is based on Plato's metaphysics, it already displays traces of his *analytics* of translation and his ideas about the translation of the letter, as well as about translation as a destruction of the

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[6] Berman 2007: 29. Translations from Bulgarian are mine.

[7] Berman 1987: 69.

[8] Berman 1987: 63.

[9] Berman 1987: 64.

[10] Berman 1987: 65. Berman acknowledges that the process of translation is not solely based on this structural paradigm: "Voila qui paraît incontestable, et dans le contexte qui est le nôtre, il faut dire que c'est la structure 'platonicienne' du language qui permet le traduire. Cependant je vais essayer de montrer (sans aucune prétention à la scientificité) que, loin d'être fondée sur cette structure, la traduction est le seul acte qui effectue et concrétise cette scission" (Berman 1987 : 65).

essence of the work.[11] In the original language, the meaning of a text is inextricably linked to the letter, and thus translators are constrained by the laws of the letter. Conversely, in the target language, the language into which we translate, we are subject to the laws of sense. Berman develops this concept by examining the relationships between the signifier and the signified in the source and target languages. These relationships are always distinct and never identical. This observation necessitates a critical revision of his perspective regarding the notion of the unchangeable sense transmuting into other covers and languages, as previously mentioned. The literal translation is the correct translation, as it creates "du sens pur et univoque".[12] Consequently, by situating translation within the context of Platonism, we are compelled to simultaneously elevate (valorise) and diminish the value (devalorise) of translation. Translation serves to reveal the 'true' (le vrai) of the original work,[13] yet at the same time presents an opportunity to assess the veracity of the original text, and "épreuve de vérité" of the original text.[14]

Berman's starting point for including Plato in the processes of defining the nature of translation is based on his conception of translation in three fundamental aspects: cultural, literary and philosophical:

> From a cultural point of view, it is ethnocentric. From a literary point of view, it is hypertextual. And from a philosophical point of view, it is Platonic. The ethnocentric, hypertextual, and Platonic nature of translation covers and conceals a deeper essence of translation that is at once ethical, poetic, and intellective.[15]

Berman analytics of translation is informed by a critical perspective on ethnocentrism, hypertextuality, and Platonism of translation. He identifies three key oppositions within this framework: ethnocentric (from a cultural point of view) translation versus ethical, hypertextual (from a literary point of view) versus poetic, and Platonic or Platonising (from a philosophical point of view) translation, which is focused on capturing and conveying meaning, versus 'thinking' (pensant).[16] These oppositions are understood as reflections on the nature of translation, of translation sui generis, and its relationship to its own experience. Ethnocentric translation is defined as a process that aims at capturing the sense, conveying and 'narrating' it in the target language in a manner that is free from any interference between the source language and the translated language, as well as between the source cultural system and the recipient cultural sys-

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[11] Berman 1987: 72.
[12] Berman 1987: 68.
[13] Berman 1987: 73.
[14] Berman 1987: 71.
[15] Berman 2007: 23.
[16] Berman 2007: 24.

tem. In Berman's view, however, translation should be essentially and inherently ethical, that is, translation's main goals are accuracy and fidelity. In Berman's terminology, this is the 'letter' of the original text. The objective of this kind of translation is to create the possibility for the foreign to be received in the culture and language of the recipient by adhering to the 'letter' of the original text. The ethical dimension of translation is intrinsic to the translator's personality, as the decision to translate accurately and faithfully or inaccurately and 'unfaithfully' is an ethical question pertaining to the subject of translation. Hypertextual translation and poetic translation are distinguished based on their form. Hypertextual translation adapts, imitates, and transforms the source text, whereas poetic translation preserves the foreign text in its original form, which is often the true, most valuable, and largely untranslatable. In Berman's view, poetic translation represents a more literal approach that enables the expression of messages concealed within the original text.[17]

The conveyance of the sense of a word or text and the restitution of that sense in translation may be regarded as the ultimate goal of the process. Nevertheless, the key to achieving this objective is not the transmission of an abstract meaning, of the sense in its abstractness, but rather the transmission of the letter as a sense. The sense is not an abstract referentiality to which the letter refers; rather, it is literally present within the letter itself. In other words, the sense is the letter itself.
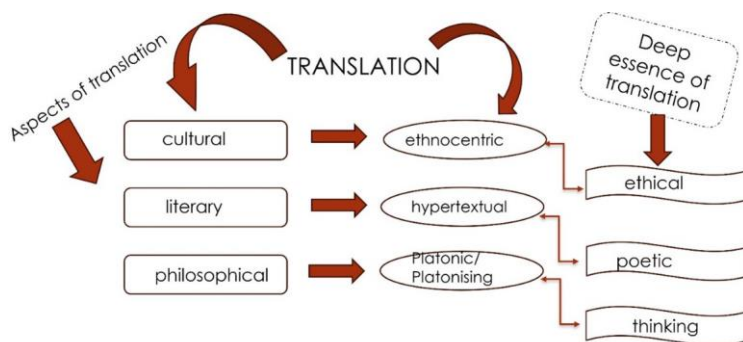

Figure 1. Aspects, types and nature of translation in Antoine Berman's model.

Through Plato's reception the 'deep essence' of the practice of translation connects with the philosophical in translation. The Platonic essence

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[17] To illustrate the distinction between poetic and hypertextual translation, Berman presents two examples: the translation of two fragments of Sappho by Edith Mora and Michel Deguy. Mora's translation is hypertextual, while Deguy's is defined as poetic. The poetic translation is concrete and accentuating, even more foreignizing than the foreign (Greek) text (Berman 2007: 79–84).

of translation is expressed in the field of meta-physics in the etymological sense: what is subject to translation and translating is an 'invariant', a 'meaning' conceived as a being per se, without the 'body' constituting its sensory envelope being transferred.[18] What is to be translated in the act of translation is not the copy of the world, but the Ideas, the Forms themselves. Translation is considered as 'thinking', as opposed to Platonizing, insofar as it is itself the object of its own cognition, and is based on its inherent translational experience, which is defined as the practice of translation. Translation can be seen as a discipline in its own right, related to philosophy and philosophising, but first and foremost, it is related to thought and to thinking. In order to overcome the inherent opposition between the translation of the letter, which is central to his analytics, and the translation of meaning, Berman abandons the notion of Platonising translation. This is because the latter is conceived as the translation of meaning and because the capture of meaning is ethnocentric in nature.

In the chapter "Canon"[19] in *The Translator's Invisibility*, Lawrence Venuti discusses the translation work of Sir John Denham (1614–1669) as one of the representatives of the neoclassical method in translation and aristocratic literary culture. Venuti's aim is to situate Denham's translation of Virgil's *Aeneid* within the social context of seventeenth-century translation practices[20] in order to describe the strategy of readable, fluent translation and the way in which it fits into the political and class-historical framework of the period.

Denham follows Horace's fashionable prescription of the time[21], applied to the activity of writing rather than translating, not to translate as *fidus interpres* (faithful translator). Venuti himself interprets Horace's words on translation as a poetic practice and contrasts them with Denham's view of poetry as the goal of translation, and of the translation of poetic works in particular. For Denham, translating as a 'faithful translator' is an appropriate strategy for scholars and teachers, but not for poets.[22] Venuti defines Denham's method of translation as "a modern revival of an ancient cultural practice", according to which Denham's translation is a copy – "a simulacrum of 'Virgil's true 'original', rationalized with a Platonic

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[18] Berman 2007: 30.

[19] Venuti 2018: 35–82.

[20] Venuti 2018: 45.

[21] Nec verbo verbum curabis reddere fidus / intepres (Hor. *A.P.* 133–134) – you will not seek to render word for word as a faithful translator. Horace's verse offers a prescription for young writers who have set out to write, suggesting that they should follow foreign (Greek) models by freely reinterpreting them. This interpretation is antithetical to the view that a faithful translator (and translators must be faithful) must translate word for word. In other words, this verse has been interpreted ambivalently over time by different translators, with a preference for either a literal or free translation.

[22] Venuti 2018: 37.

theory of translation as the copy of a copy of the truth"[23]: "I have made it my principal care to follow him, as he made it his to follow Nature in all his proportions".[24] The process of translation thus appears to involve two stages of copying: the copying of the copy of the truth and the copying of the truth itself. In this context, the translator (as well as the author) does not seem to have access to the truth itself, but only to a copy of it. The original is the copy of the truth, its representative in the act of translation.

Similarly, in the chapter "Simpatico"[25], Venuti draws on Plato's metaphysics to define his own method and strategy of translating a poem by the Italian poet Milo De Angelis. Since De Angelis's poem with its specific language characteristics resists the common transparent method of translation, the translator is forced to transfer the mirror image of the author in translation. It is here that the act of copying the copy of truth is displaced by the act of copying the copy of the author, so that the author appears as the Idea, the Form in Plato's sense. The translator's work is thus concealed and erased, masking any mediation between the two copies, i.e., between the copy and the original.

> It is here that a Platonic metaphysics emerges from beneath romantic individualism to construe translation as the copy of a copy, dictating a translation strategy in which the effect of transparency masks the mediations between and within copy and original, eclipsing the translator's labor with an illusion of authorial presence…[26]

In a somewhat paradoxical manner, the so-called 'Platonic theory of translation', which is conceived as a pure process of copying (that is a "copy of the copy of the truth"), presents itself as advocating the domesticating method of translation according to the rules of fluency of the target language and unhindered reception in the recipient culture. If the only object of translation is itself a copy, then the existence of an invariant in translation is called into question, and the boundaries of what is translated are open to shifts and changes that the copy as a duplicate, imitation, or reproduction does not imply. Should consideration be given to Arrojo's view[27] that "mainstream conceptions of the so-called 'original' and the idealized relationship they propose between the original and its translations are still very much reminiscent of Plato's theory of forms and its devaluation of representations", translation comes at the end of this chain of devaluations from reality to truth to speech to writing to translation.

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[23] Venuti 2018: 39.
[24] Denham 1656: A3v quoted by Venuti 1995: 39.
[25] Venuti 2018: 237–264.
[26] Venuti 2018: 251.
[27] Arrojo 2019: 34.

The concept of translation: nature and type

Charles Martindale[28] draws on the philosophical views of Plato, Immanuel Kant and Hans-Georg Gadamer in an attempt to construct an aesthetic theory of translation. His study focuses on John Dryden's (1631–1700) translations of Ovid's writings, which have themselves become a canon. In order to argue for the canonicity of the translations and to disrupt the dichotomous vision of translation that is enclosed in the oppositions of original-translation, source-target text, true-false, good-bad, Martindale turns to the aesthetic qualities of the target texts and to the construction of a theoretical paradigm of translation based on the Kantian model.

Martindale's model is based on two fundamental principles: firstly, that aesthetic judgment does not presuppose hierarchy; and secondly, that in aesthetics each judgment of taste is individual and singular, devoid of logical criteria that are a priori non-aesthetic, on the grounds that "there are no rules for beauty".[29] Consequently, the hierarchical tenets of alternative translation theories can be deconstructed in favour of an anti-hierarchical, horizontal conceptualisation of translation, wherein the simultaneous transmission of form and content, without conferring precedence to either, constitutes a novel aesthetic object.[30] The traditional models of translation include "a hierarchy and a Platonic ontology of origination", which establishes a clear distinction between primary and secondary, between the original and its translation.[31] In this context, translation is conceived as a process of origination, of generation in a hierarchical diachronic axis, and the original text always appears first/primary, followed by its translation, which is second/secondary.

A translation, like the work of art in "Republic" 10, is a copy of a prior original, and thus at a further remove from reality (in Plato, of course, the 'original' is itself a copy of the form).[32]

Accordingly, Martindale suggests that the activity of translation is situated in the domain of Platonic philosophical thought. However, he subsequently challenges the notion of hierarchy and binarity by employing the tenets of deconstruction, particularly Gadamer's perspective on 'the ontology of portraiture', suggesting that the act of making a portrait can be regarded as 'a form of translation in a different medium'.[33] Translation is not an act of copying something existing (like a painting), but

[28] Martindale 2008.
[29] Martindale 2008 : 90.
[30] Martindale 2008: 88.
[31] Martindale 2008: 92.
[32] Martindale 2008: 92.
[33] Martindale 2008: 92.

rather a process of 'ontological communion' between the copy and the original. In this sense, the original exists only at the moment of its representation, and thus does not have an 'unchanging Platonic essence'. Rather, it changes with each subsequent representation.[34] The multiple representations of the primary source do not present a challenge in terms of the 'aesthetic theory of translation'. The concept of the beautiful object implies and even requires the existence of replicas, which are themselves aesthetic objects.

> An aesthetic translation begins with a judgement of taste, and involves the creation of a new beautiful object by an act of aesthetic repetition, which is not like a purely instrumental form of copying.[35]

In this sense, Martindale entirely disconnects the idea of the relationship between the original and the translation from its theoretical framework, postulating the independence of the object of translating (the object to be translated) from the translation itself, i.e. the translation product, focusing on the aesthetic criteria of the two texts without tying them to any notion of equivalence or identity. In Martindale's understanding of aesthetic translation, primary importance is given to the beauty of the source and target texts, which have independent lives. The process of copying, that lies at the heart of the act of translation, is thus not conceived as an imitation or duplication of the original, but as the creation of a product, distant and removed from the source text to the extent of constituting a new original, of becoming itself a source text in the target-language culture.

The nature of translation and its definition through the notion of equivalence is one of the key issues in translation theory. The many definitions of translation move in two directions: one is more theoretical and philosophical, considering translation in metaphysical categories and in relation to inquiries into the nature of language or equivalence; the other is more practical and applied, focusing on questions of linguistic transformations and the relationships between source and target texts.

The equivalence of translation is contingent upon a specific 'measure' inherent to the translation process, which enables the attainment of the 'truth' of translation.[36] According to John Sallis, the inquiry into the measure and truth of translation can be resolved by a 'classical determination of translation', delineated in Plato's dialogue *Critias*.[37] Sallis's thesis on the nature, i.e., the measure and the truth of translation is based on Solon's account of the history of the city of Athens, which begins in the

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[34] Martindale 2008: 92.
[35] Martindale 2008: 93.
[36] Sallis 2008: 53.
[37] Sallis 2008: 53.

preceding dialogue, *Timaeus*. Critias relates the account of his grandfather, also named Critias, which was relayed to the latter by his father, Dropides, the great-grandfather of young Critias. The story was told to Dropides by his friend Solon.

Solon visited the Egyptian city of Saïs, which was founded by a goddess whose name in Egyptian was Neïth and in Greek Athena. There he learned from the Egyptian priests that the Greeks had no ancient traditions preserved due to the numerous natural disasters that had befallen them over the years and the destruction of the population. Furthermore, nothing was saved in writing. Consequently, the Egyptians saved the ancient traditions of the glory and laws of Athens, which the priests handed down to Solon.[38] In the Critias dialogue, Critias himself returns to the story of the Egyptian priests, which was later brought to Athens by Solon. In this section of his discussion of Athens, Critias addresses a point that is central to Sallis' thesis and which he quotes:

> As Solon was planning to make use of the story (λόγος) in his own poetry, he found, on investigating the force of the names (τὴν τῶν ὀνομάτων δύναμιν) that those Egyptians who had first written them down had translated them into their own voice (φωνή).[39]

> So he himself, in turn, retrieved the thought (διάνοια) of each name and leading it into our own voice wrote it out.[40]

> The entire original passage reads as follows:

> (a) Τὸ δ' ἔτι βραχὺ πρὸ τοῦ λόγου δεῖ δηλῶσαι, μὴ πολλάκις ἀκούοντες Ἑλληνικὰ βαρβάρων ἀνδρῶν ὀνόματα θαυμάζητε· τὸ γὰρ αἴτιον αὐτῶν πεύσεσθε. Σόλων, ἅτ' ἐπινοῶν εἰς τὴν αὐτοῦ ποίησιν καταχρήσασθαι τῷ λόγῳ, διαπυνθανόμενος τὴν τῶν ὀνομάτων δύναμιν, ηὗρεν τούς τε Αἰγυπτίους τοὺς πρώτους ἐκείνους αὐτὰ γραψαμένους εἰς τὴν αὐτῶν φωνὴν μετενηνοχότας, αὐτός τε αὖ πάλιν ἑκάστου τὴν διάνοιαν ὀνό-

> (b) ματος ἀναλαμβάνων εἰς τὴν ἡμετέραν ἄγων φωνὴν ἀπεγράφετο·[41]

> But before this story, one more thing should be briefly explained, lest, hearing often Hellenic names (words) among barbarians, you may wonder. Because you will know the reason for it. As Solon intended to make use of this story for his poetry, investigating the force of the names (words), he also found that the Egyptians, those first, wrote them down after transferring (translating) them into

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[38] Pl. *Ti.* 20e-25d.
[39] Sallis 2008: 54.
[40] Sallis 2008: 55.
[41] Pl. *Criti.*113a.

their own voice (language), and he himself, retrieving again the thought (meaning) of each name (word), wrote it down once more, leading it into our voice (language).[42]

The search for the truth about translation passes through several starting points in Solon's narrative. First, these are the two goddesses (Neïth and Athena), creators of the two cities of Saïs and Athens. The two cities are so similar that they can be seen as doubles of each other, as an original and a copy. In other words, there is a metaphor for translation, which represents the foundation on which the 'basic constitution' and the 'determination of translation' will take place. Secondly, there is the idea of foreignness: for Solon, the history of Athens is not only told by non-Greeks, i.e. foreigners, but it is also recorded in a foreign (non-Greek) language. The foreign language requires the translation. Third is the study of the 'force of names' (τὴν τῶν ὀνομάτων δύναμιν). The force of the words is linked to translation because Solon, trying to learn what the force of words is, arrived at the idea of translation: the Egyptians translated the Greek names into their language and wrote them down, then Solon in turn translated the Egyptian names into Greek. According to Sallis, the force of a name lies in its "capacity to make manifest that which it names", and to do what is proper to the name, and what is proper to the name is "that it announce that which it names".[43]

It is in the last part of Critias' remark – he himself, retrieving the thought (meaning) of each name, wrote it down once more, leading it into our voice (language) – that Sallis sees the essential founding act of translation: "here for the first time the structure, the basic constitution, of translation is determined", this is the "inaugural, proto-classical determination of translation",[44] and "inasmuch as, after Plato, this determination is founded on the distinction between intelligible and sensible, it can also be called the metaphysical determination of translation".[45] Sallis identifies as a key concept 'the restitution of meaning' (πάλιν ἑκάστου τὴν διάνοιαν ὀνόματος ἀναλαμβάνων).

Simplifying the classical definition of translation leads to a focus on linguistic transformations in which one word corresponds to a word from another language on the basis of identity in their meaning. Therefore, the truth of translation consists in the translation having the same mea-

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[42] The text referenced by Sallis on page 54 is from an English translation of the dialogue and does not contain the concluding part of the second sentence, which is presented on the subsequent page (Sallis 2008: 55). The original text in Greek is presented herewith, accompanied by a literal translation (translation is mine) into English, the latter being offered for the sake of greater precision and clarity.

[43] Sallis 2008: 54.
[44] Sallis 2008: 55.
[45] Sallis 2008: 56.

ning as the original, and "the measure of translation is the restitution of meaning".[46] The restitution of meaning underlies the metaphysical determination of translation.[47] Sallis locates the end of the classical determination of translation at the point where Heidegger proclaims the end of metaphysics and translation becomes a pure act of interpretation.[48]

Sign, meaning and translation: mimesis and untranslatability

The *discontinuum* of the sign, its epistemological fragmentation, is discussed by Henri Meschonnic[49] to justify the need for a completely new theory of language. His theory of translation plays with oppositions such as *continuum* and *discontinuum*, two concepts related to thinking about language. Meschonnic attributes to Plato the introduction of the latter, by adding "order (taxis), measurability (metron), and mathematical proportion (harmonia) to the Heraclitean continuum of rhythm as flow".[50] In contrast, the continuum is concerned with the physical aspects of language. Rhythm is related to the continuum insofar as it relates rhythm to continuous flow. Rhythm is what language and words do, and consequently it is what is subjected to the act of translation. Hence, to translate is to 'deplatonize' language. This term, coined by Meschonnic, is understood as a peculiar disregard for Plato's conception of language, according to which "rhythm in poetry is a mere imitation of life (mimesis)" and which implies the existence of language as something 'outside of' life rather than being its constitutive element.[51] In the act of translating language undergoes a specific 'deplatonization'. The *discontinuum* of both sign and rhythm is therefore at the core of Meschonnic's critique of traditional translation paradigms.

Plato emerges through Jacques Derrida's deconstruction as an authority in discussions of the relations between signifier and signified, of translatability and untranslatability, and the transferable in translation. By linking the problem of the difference between Saussure's notions of signifier and signified to questions of translatability/untranslatability through Derrida's concept of 'différance', Peter Florentsen[52] illustrates the impossibility of translation as a prerequisite for the loss of coherent and rigorous philosophical thought in the translation of philosophical discourse,

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[46] Sallis 2008: 55.

[47] We have already noted this conception in the work of Antoine Berman, who defines the ideality of the text as the restitution of the sense (Berman 1987: 63).

[48] Sallis 2008: 58.

[49] Meschonnic 2011: 66.

[50] Meschonnic 2011: 140.

[51] Meschonnic 2011: 171.

[52] Florentsen 1994.

using the example of Derrida's text "Plato's Pharmacy", dedicated to Plato's *pharmakon* in the dialogue *Phaedrus*.[53]

Let us briefly note the main topics of the dialogue in order to place the discussion in the broader framework of translation theory: 1) Conversation about Lysias speech on love and madness; 2) Socrates' first speech based on a critique of the structure of Lysias' speech; 3) Socrates' second speech, which rehabilitates love and madness as divine inspiration; 4) Chariot allegory of the soul as a charioteer; 5) Philosophy, writing and rhetoric, and – 6) Writing and speaking – speaking must be placed on a higher level than writing because it is at the heart of communication. The author should be present to defend himself. Writing as *pharmakon*.

Insofar as translatability presupposes some 'prelinguistic meaning' that enables "the transfer of semantic content from one language to another", and meaning is conceived as an 'effect of language', "signified meaning cannot survive the material substitution of signifiers" in the process of translation.[54] Thus, when we have to translate an ambiguous word such as pharmakon (meaning both 'remedy' and 'poison'), we are faced with the impossibility of translation and the 'undecidability' between these two meanings, which "undermines the metaphysical system of Plato's Phaedrus".[55] The problem is complicated by the association of *pharmakon* with knowledge (episteme), with the living logos, 'le logos vivant'[56] which is the opposite of writing, and in particular with philosophical knowledge (logos).

Starting from the translation problem of transferring one of the two meanings of the Greek word, Derrida enters the philosophical debate on the association of writing with *pharmakon*. The 'indeterminacy' between meanings in polysemy 'differs' and 'defers' meaning and content in Derrida's thought, to express in a peculiar way the essence of the concept of 'différance'. The problems of translating Plato's dialogues are thus placed at the heart of issues that are central to the field of translation studies, which concern both the distortion of the intratextual semantic networks of the original text and the possibility or impossibility of adequately conveying the content and the logic of the philosophical text.

Conclusion

The reception of Plato's metaphysics in translation theory is distant from the traditional principal issues of translation studies, such as equivalence, the constitution of typologies or taxonomies, comparative stylistics

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[53] Derrida 1972.
[54] Florentsen 1994: 233.
[55] Florentsen 1994: 233.
[56] Derrida 1972: 272.

or linguistics, comparative literary studies, translation methods and methodology, interlingual transformations and intercultural communication. Rather, it calls for a re-evaluation of the ontology of translation and its paralinguistic characteristics, features and concepts. As might be expected, Plato provides a bridge for linking philosophy and translation. Plato's 'contributions' to translation studies have led to the exploration of fundamental questions concerning the nature, essence, and truth of translation, the heterogeneous revelations of language in translation, the nature of language itself and its transcendent manifestation in writing. It is somewhat paradoxical that Plato's key notion of mimesis, of the interactions between the copy and the original, leads to the conclusion that translational reflection should be directed towards meaning as an invariant in translation, towards the secondary role of the letter, the word and the signifier at the expense of the meaning and the signified. In a paradoxical manner as well, translation theorists also invoke Plato to criticise traditional notions in translation studies and to justify the necessity to 'deplatonize' language and translation. This entails the shifting of focus, blurring the boundaries of dichotomic thinking in translation theory and the undermining of the status of the source text. Through Plato, the reflection on translation becomes a philosophical reflection on the modus operandi of the translation process, on the origin, essence and nature of the act of translation and of language as its primary object.

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