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Heidegger

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The thought of Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) was shaped to a quite unprecedented extent by the work of translation. Not only did he spend a great deal of time and effort translating and re-translating the words of early Greek thinkers, but those translations are interwoven with reflections on their own adequacy, on the (in)adequacy of other translations, and on the difficulty and necessity of translation as a dimension of philosophical thought. For readers of Heidegger in English, or any language other than German, the necessity of reflecting on the translation adds further layers of complexity to this already complex hermeneutic situation. One consequence is that it is very difficult, sometimes even positively misleading, to try to separate out Heidegger's own translation practice from his reflections on translation, and those reflections in turn from the translations and reflections of his translators. Any such attempt, as Heidegger always insisted, already works with its own interpretive principles, which need to be opened up to dispute and modification.

Section 1 will set out Heidegger's views on the situation of the philosophical translator by outlining his radical rethinking of hermeneutics as involving the existential enactment of one's own hermeneutic situation. In Section 2 I explore a key instance of Heidegger's translation practice along with his reflections on translation. Section 3 gives a brief history of how thinking about Heidegger and translation has developed and of recent disputes that reflect back on attempts to translate some of his most difficult texts.

1. Heidegger's radical hermeneutics

Heidegger's early studies in theology made him familiar with German traditions in philology and hermeneutics. Having worked on both historical and contemporary problems in philosophy in his doctoral work and very first lecture courses, Heidegger delivered a series of lecture courses in the early 1920s, working intensively on the philosophy of Aristotle. He became convinced that what was really important for philosophical thought in these ancient texts had been covered over by centuries of interpretation and translation. A radical hermeneutic approach was thus needed that would *de-structure* the traditional interpretations and free up what was originally significant about the questions that Aristotle posed and the concepts that he developed, so that they could once more be appropriately understood by contemporary thinkers. Part and parcel of this attempt to radically retrieve Aristotle's philosophy for the 'the situation of a living present' (Heidegger 2009: 39) was the retranslation of his key concepts.

Certainly the dictum that every translation is an interpretation holds true for Heidegger. Yet to understand the full import of that dictum for him it is important to see that radical interpretation involves the enactment of the interpreter's own hermeneutical situation that is at one and the same time the retrieval or repetition of the hermeneutical situation of those thinkers that one is interpreting and translating.

Philosophy does not simply involve the production of a set of propositions that can be confirmed or disconfirmed through a process of thought that is neutrally available to anyone. The context in which such propositions appear and within which they need to be interpreted is not a ready-made or fixed conceptual scheme or framework. It is a

lived situation that belongs to the thinker and is enacted in and through the thinking itself. In a report on the research that he was conducting into Aristotle's philosophy in 1922, Heidegger puts the point directly and clearly: '*To understand* does not simply mean to cognitively confirm, but rather to *repeat* primordially what is understood in terms of its ownmost situation and for that situation' (Heidegger, 2009: 41). The enactment of our own hermeneutical situation, the point of view and way of understanding we adopt, is not anterior to or subsequent to the thinking enactment of the situation of those we are trying to understand, interpret and translate. The enactment of our own hermeneutical situation is at one and the same time the re-enactment of the situation to be understood.

The lectures from the summer semester of 1922 *Phenomenological Interpretations of selected treatises of Aristotle on Ontology and Logic* that were distilled into the report just cited give a remarkable insight into Heidegger's developing translation practice and its centrality to his developing philosophical method. He translates long passages of Aristotle's texts for his students and comments on those translations, not as a preliminary to philosophical exposition and criticism, but as itself a repetition of that hermeneutic situation that is to 'free up' the text for understanding. In the introduction to these translations as radical hermeneutic repetitions, Heidegger says the following about the practice of translation:

> The standard and character of a translation is always relative to the goal of
> interpretation. Here we are concerned not with exercises in style, but with
> a full appropriation of the interrelations of sense, i.e., of the meaningful
> matters, to re-enact the insights and interrelations of insights that

originally brought forth those matters. The more precisely the translation is aimed at *that*, the stricter it is in each case. A so-called literal translation, that sticks to the words that are given and translates them as they are set down in the Lexicon, that in the translation takes them up and in doing so leaves them just as they are, is the most irrelevant imaginable. It works through single terms and meanings determined *by 'words'*. This apparent definiteness brings to every word use, just as in philosophical expressions, leeway for the greatest ambiguity. (Heidegger 2005: 7)

It is only when we find expressions that re-enact the hermeneutic situation that there is a matter of concern for philosophy to think through at all. Philosophical translation does aim not at giving us access to an eternal conversation about matters of perennial and already determined significance. Nor does it aim make a set of prior results available so that we can determine whether they are relevant to problems we have already set for ourselves. The sense of the words used is to be determined in the re-enactment of the situation in which something to be understood appears, and translation is an integral dimension of that re-enactment.

At first sight it can seem that Heidegger's translations are arbitrary and wilful, going not only against the grain of received renderings, but twisting meanings, wrenching them out of context so as to suit his own philosophical purposes. Yet Heidegger insists that a proper context for philosophical translation and thought must be forged in the act of translation and thought itself. The hermeneutical situation is an inter-relation of meaning that we are thrown into, but it remains an arbitrary collection of accretions until a point of view is found that allows us to re-think the core matter of

concern, which means opening up a 'range of view' within which 'the interpretation's claim to objectivity moves.' (Heidegger 2009: 39) This range of view, the horizon of understanding, does not illicitly transpose the views and concerns of the translator-thinker onto a source text. Rather, it is what allows the translator to open up the matter of concern that the source text itself is concerned with. The most important feature of such a translation for Heidegger is therefore not that it presents us with a complete and ready-made doctrine, since thought itself is not a doctrine or set of doctrines, but that it allows an approach towards a matter of concern that opens and maintains a field of meaning. The translator needs to open that field of meaning once more so that readers can themselves re-think the matter of concern.

For Heidegger, then, philosophical translation must make use of what we might call an existential context principle. The context in which a translation takes place and makes sense is not simply a set of lexical items that can be arranged and rearranged. The translator finds themselves in the midst of a tradition that both allows for a preliminary understanding and tends to fix that understanding into preconceived doctrines. The translation is the first and in many ways most significant moment in the process of 'destructuring' the traditional ways of thinking that we simply inherit and freeing them up so that we can take them up and understand them for ourselves.

2. Thinking as translation of grounding words

In the light of the preceding summary of Heidegger's notion of the hermeneutical situation it is possible to begin to understand one of the most significant and peculiar features of his philosophical translation practice: the singling out of words. Despite

his warning against 'literal' translations that exchange words for the supposed equivalents, some words, in Heidegger's view, form unique constellation points around which whole philosophical works, philosophical projects and even the spirit of a language and an historical people gather. As is made clear by the proper understanding of the hermeneutical situation, concentrating on single words in this way should not be seen as a violation of the context principle, that words only make sense in their context, but an existential radicalisation of that principle. These are what Heidegger calls fundamental, basic or grounding words.

Heidegger will frequently translate and retranslate such words from Greek philosophy, and the understanding of Heidegger's own thinking frequently turns on attempts to translate grounding words of his own. They should not be thought of as key words as though we could find a corresponding key translation that would open up everything for us and make it instantly available. Grounding words do not give us access to a sense that is already locked away in them, but are the constellation points of repeated attempts to make sense of what has been written and said. As such they are themselves never completely unlocked or made wholly intelligible. As we translate and retranslate these words they are the source of any understanding of the text we achieve, and as such should not simply be manipulated on each occasion to achieve one act of communication amongst others.

Following the course of Heidegger's repeated translations of a number of such grounding words can serve to exemplify both the practice of translation called for here, and the various ways in which these words show us what he comes to understand by *being*: the coming about of a domain or dimension of intelligibility. Of

the grounding words of Greek philosophy, Heidegger works his way back thorough the Aristotelian *ousia* and the Platonic *idea* as concepts that have been fixed in the Western philosophical tradition as ways to name being as *constant presence*. He then tries to shift this tradition back to question how it is that anything can come to be present and so the question of being for him becomes the question of how *presencing* comes about.

Perhaps the best known of the grounding words that Heidegger returns to repeatedly and translates variously in his philosophical career is *alētheia*. Section 44 of *Being and Time* contains a justly famous analysis, rethinking and translation of this word, which is traditionally translated as 'truth' [*Wahrheit*]. Truth is traditionally conceived according to a series of Latin translations of Aristotle's phrase: *pathēmata tēs psychēs tōn pragmaton homoiōmata* [experiences of the soul that correspond to things] translated as *adaequatio intellectus et rei* by Thomas Aquinas. Heidegger traces this translation back to Avicenna and this to Isaak Israeli's *Book of Definitions* which 'also uses the terms *correspondentia* [correspondence] and *convenentia* [coming together] for *adequatio* [agreement]. There is already a move, in tracing this series of borrowings and providing these translations, towards the thought that truth as correspondence is not simply what is the case in a relation between intellect and thing. There must be a 'coming together' of the two. What allows for any such coming together is what Heidegger calls the 'primordial' phenomenon of truth. This conception is what is he finds hinted at in early Greek thought, but also the beginnings of its covering over (BT-MR 198/ BT-SS 206/ SZ 214).

There follows a threefold translation of *alētheia* that shows the increasingly primordial phenomena of truth. The truth that grounds a judgement is what has been discovered [*entdeckt*]. The discovery itself depends on being-discovering [*entdeckend-sein*] (BT-MR 261/ BT-SS 209 /SZ 218). But finally discovery itself of beings in the world depends on a sense of *alētheia* that Heidegger translates as the 'disclosure' [*Unverborgenheit*] of the world, the very domain of intelligibility in which anything can be discovered.

These translations are meant to return us to what the Greeks would have found 'self-evident' in the very word *alētheia*, rather than to present to us a new theory of truth:

> To translate this word as 'truth' and especially to define this word conceptually in theoretical ways, is to cover over the meaning of what the Greeks posited at the basis - as 'self-evident' and as pre-philosophical - of the terminological use of *alētheia*. (BT-MR 202/ SZ 219)

The translation movement from 'discoveries' to 'discovering' and then to the 'disclosure' of the world, allows us to re-enact the hermeneutical situation in which what was pre-philosophical and self-evident in the Greek understanding becomes explicit in a way that allows Heidegger himself to think through the matter in a way that was not immediately available to the Greeks. A further significant feature of *alētheia* that is covered over by its translation as 'truth' and revealed in Heidegger's translations is the *privative* character (signified in the Greek by the prefix *a-*) that is restored in the words *dis*covery [*Ent*decktheit] and *dis*closure [*Un*verborgenheit]:

Truth (discoveredness) must always first be wrested from beings. Beings are torn from concealment. The actual factical discoveredness is, so to speak, always a kind of *robbery*. Is it a matter of chance that the Greeks express themselves about the essence of truth with a *privative* expression (*a-lētheia*)? Does not a primordial understanding of its own being make itself known in such an expression - the understanding (even if it is only pre-ontological) that being-in-untruth constitutes an essential determination of being-in-the-world? (BT-MR 204/ SZ 222)

Once more Heidegger's translations attempt to make explicit what is 'self-evident' in the Greek, a feature of *alētheia* that is not given explicit philosophical consideration and yet can be uncovered and freed up for such consideration through the right translation.

Heidegger will return to *alētheia* many times, highlighting and exposing the significance of its character as the revealing and unveiling that is the primordial phenomenon of truth (see Wrathall 2011). In the 1930s in lecture courses on the Pre-Socratics and in an important series of 'being-historical' texts he comes to translate *alētheia as* 'sheltering en-closure' [*Entbergung*] (Heidegger 1992: 114; Heidegger 2013: 4), which is a coinage of his own, used to rethink *alētheia* as the making of a space for sheltering. The 'robbery' of ripping beings out of concealment was implicitly at work in the Western tradition, shaping our ways of world disclosure. But 'concealing' need not be thought as what needs to be eradicated in the coming about of disclosure and hence discovery. What is concealed can be sheltered from attempts to bring it into complete and exhaustive exposure and at the same time given space to

reveal itself. At this point Heidegger's translation goes beyond what he thinks the Greeks implicitly or explicitly thought in the expression *alētheia* to what remained unthought in their expression.

It would possible to trace Heidegger's translations of a number of other Greek 'grounding words' through his writings, showing the complex interactions of his philosophical rethinking and the reworkings of his translations in each case. Having sketched one prominent example of how Heidegger's way of thinking unfolds hand in hand with his translation of fundamental terms in Greek philosophy, I will now turn to what is perhaps the most important set of meditations explicitly concerned with translation in Heidegger's work, those elucidating his engagement with the famous choral ode in Sophocles' *Antigone*, in lecture courses from the mid-1930s. Heidegger first translates and interprets this ode from Sophocles in the lectures *Introduction to Metaphysics* from 1935, which were subsequently published in 1953 in German and translated into English by Ralph Manheim in 1959. It was thus one of the first of his extended writings to appear in English. The book was retranslated by Richard Polt and Gregory Fried in 2000, with a revised and expanded edition appearing in 2014 (Heidegger 2014: vii-xxvi). It has thus been and continues to be central to the English-speaking reception of Heidegger's work. In one of the most significant passages in this book, Heidegger provides his own complete translation of the famous choral ode together with two extended commentaries on its philosophical significance. It is the first two lines of the ode, however, that provide the impetus and the guiding thread:

> Polla ta deina kouden an-
> thrōpou deinoteron pelei

> [many the wonders nothing
> than-human-beings more-wonderful is]

Heidegger translates:

> Vielfältig das Unheimliche, nichts doch
> über den Menschen hinaus Unheimlicheres ragend sich regt.
> (Heidegger 1953: 112)
>
> Manifold is the uncanny, yet nothing
> Uncannier than man bestirs itself, rising up beyond him.
>
> (Heidegger 2014: 163 [trans Fried and Polt])

This translation and the commentaries that follow appear in a section of *Introduction to Metaphysics* entitled 'Being and Thinking' in which Heidegger sets out to explore various ways in which being, understood as presencing, has undergone various 'restrictions' in the course of the 'history of being' that followed upon the early Greek thinkers. He is concerned here to understand the relationship of human beings to being. He emphasises the 'violence' [*Gewalt*] of human beings and their incursions into the realm of beings, which is generally taken to be the central message of the ode; that human beings essentially strive to tame violently the beings around them. However, Heidegger's translation suggests something more beyond this thought:

> But why do we translate *deinon* as 'un-canny'? Not in order to cover up or weaken the sense of the violent, the overwhelming or the violence-doing: quite the contrary. *Deinon* applies most intensely and intimately to human Being [...]
>
> We understand by un-canny that which throws us out of the 'canny,' that is the homely, the accustomed, the current, the unendangered. The unhomely does not allow us to be at home.

Heidegger makes *deinon* the focal point of his translation and understanding, not only of this ode, but Greek thinking of what is essential to human life. Human beings can exercise the particular kinds of controlling violence that they do because they themselves are subject to being thrown out of what is canny, and thus becoming unhomely. This movement is what Heidegger performatively illustrates in this translation, moving the reader out of familiar translations of *deina* and into the unfamiliar.

That first move into the uncanny is revisited and recontextualised in a further extensive treatment of the ode and its translation in the 1942 lectures *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister"*. There Heidegger highlights the fact that his own translation is undertaken in dialogue with Friedrich Hölderlin's translations of Sophocles. He cites Hölderlin's two draft translations of these lines:

> Vieles Gewaltige giebts. Doch nichts
> Ist gewaltiger, als der Mensch.
>
> There is much that is powerful [or 'violent']. Yet nothing
> Is more violent than the human being.   (Hölderlin 1801)
>
>
> Ungeheuer ist viel. Doch nichts
> Ungeheuerer, als der Mensch.
>
> There is much that is extraordinary [or 'monstrous']. Yet nothing
> More extraordinary than the human being. (Hölderlin 1804)

> (cited in Heidegger 1996: 69-70 [trans McNeill and Davis])

Heidegger's commentary on these translations suggests that he discerns in the retranslation of *deinon* from *Gewaltige* to *Ungeheuer*, the possible thought that at the

core of the violence that is human beings perpetrate against the beings that surround them is the very movement of being thrown open to those beings in the first place. *Ungeheuer* would usually be translated by 'monstrous' or some variant and Heidegger claims that the modern sense will be primarily of what is 'immense'. McNeill and Davis translate it as 'extraordinary' so as to be able to follow the sense of Heidegger's claim that the word can suggest the 'not ordinary' [*das Nicht-Geheuer*] and so become a precursor to his own translation of *deinon* as the un-canny. Yet significantly Heidegger also claims that this is presumably not what Hölderlin had in mind, evidenced by his return to rendering *deinon* as the '*gewaltig*' at other points in the text (1996: 71).

This is precisely what thoughtful and poetic translation at its best can achieve according to the extended 'Remark Concerning Translation' that Heidegger interjects into this lecture immediately preceding his commentary on the translation of these words:

> There is no such thing as translation if we mean that a word from one language could, or even should, be made to substitute as the equivalent of a word from another language. This impossibility, should not, however, mislead one into devaluing translation as though it were a mere failure. On the contrary: translation can even bring to light connections that indeed lie in the translated language but are not explicitly set forth in it. From this we can recognize that all translating must be an interpreting. Yet at the same time, the reverse is also true: every interpretation, and everything that stands in its service, is a translating. In that case,

translating does not only move between two different languages, but there

is a translating within one and the same language. (1996: 62)

The point here is not that we should avoid focusing on single words instead of on the sense of the text as whole. The open sense of the whole can only be established in confronting the translation of grounding words, and it is to this that Heidegger directs his efforts. The point is rather that those words carry with them traces of connections of sense that are not only implicit for the writer and his or her contemporaries, but even beyond that, are unavailable until the translation draws them out. The poetically and thoughtfully translated word can release possibilities of sense that were not explicit in the source text or in the translation itself. That is why Heidegger goes on to make the bold claim that translation is not only required in translating Sophocles' Greek into German, as he has been doing in confrontation with Hölderlin, but that proper engagement with Hölderlin's own poetical works or philosophical works like those of Kant and Hegel, require for German speakers 'translation within our own German language' (1996: 62). This is a point that has recently been taken up and elaborated upon in some detail by commentators, especially Parvis Emad. Emad considers the distinction between inter- and intra-lingual translation as crucial and yet ultimately derived from an originary sense of translation into the realm of *alētheia*, like the translation of the human into 'becoming unhomely' that these passages undertake (Emad 2010).

What we find in these later lectures is an elaboration and working out of the radical hermeneutics of Heidegger's early work. The enactment of the hermeneutic situation is renewed in confrontation with these grounding words, each of which carries with it

the potential to confront us with the singular source of sense from which our ways of understanding the world are unfolded. The ultimate aim of this kind of thoughtful and poetical translation is therefore, according to Heidegger, not so much to enable the understanding of what is expressed in a foreign language, but to confront oneself with the source of the sense that one makes of the world in one's own language: '"Translation" [*Übersetzen*] is not so much a "*trans*-lating" [Über-*setzen*] and passing over into a foreign language with the help of one's own. Rather, translation is more an awakening, clarification, and unfolding of one's own language with the help of an encounter with the foreign language' (Heidegger 1996: 66).

Understanding the specific philosophical and poetic aims of such a translation helps us to see how and why Heidegger thinks it appropriate to take what many have regarded as extreme liberties in translation. In the translation of the *Antigone* ode, for example, Heidegger makes the plural *ta deina* into the singular *das Unheimliche*, and makes the 'many' things that are designated by this term into a 'manifold' of the uncanny. In the 1942 lectures he elaborates on what he considers to be a 'threefold' set of meanings that can be found in the grounding word *to deinon*: the fearful, the powerful and the inhabitual. Each of these senses incorporates a contrary: the fearful as that which frightens and as that which is worthy of honour; the powerful as that which looms over us and that which is merely violent; and the inhabitual as that which is extraordinary and that which is skilled in everything. The translation itself does not try to amalgamate all these senses with their various contraries, but to find a way back to the singular essence which allows for this manifold of sense to unfold: 'What is essential in the essence of the *deinon* conceals itself in the originary unity of

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the fearful, the powerful and inhabitual. What is essential in all essence is always singular' (1996: 64). So Heidegger's translation as *das Unheimliche* is aimed at finding a way to return us to the 'singular' essence of sense-making.

As translators we can take inspiration from this practice even if it is not always our sole and only task to transport ourselves and others back to this origin of sense-making. A glance at the history of English translations of the Sophocles ode shows us that 'Many are the wonders…' or some variation of that rendering has been standard for many years and still features in many contemporary efforts. At the very least an engagement with Heidegger's confrontation with Sophocles and Hölderlin's translations of Sophocles should cause a translator to consider whether this standard formulation does justice to the singular multiplicity that Heidegger points us towards. Some renderings simply add 'fearful' or 'terrible' to 'wonder' as predicates to describe the many things that surround us. Others, more promisingly, search for formulations such as 'formidable', which may move us in what Heidegger considers to be the right direction; that is, to not just to an understanding of how Sophocles understood the human place in nature and how we make sense of the world we find ourselves in, but to a situation in which each one of us is confronted with that task as poet, thinker, translator and reader (for further discussion see e.g. de Beistegui 2003: 169-184; Greaves 2011).

3. Heidegger in translation

In the preceding two sections I gave an outline of Heidegger's own thinking about translation and pointed to some prominent examples of how his own translation

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practice informs and is informed by that thinking. In Section 1 we saw that the young Heidegger developed a radical hermeneutics, thinking of context as the projective enactment of a situation whereby translation plays an essential role in the task he sets himself of retrieving and destructuring the tradition of Western thought. In Section 2 we looked at some prominent elaborations of this thought and translation practice in his translations of *alētheia* and then in the 1930s in an ongoing dialogue with Hölderlin as translator-mediator of Greek poetic thinking.

I turn now to the recent reception history of Heidegger's thinking about translation. Fittingly, given his understanding of the open projection of a situation, this is still very much an ongoing project with various scholars contributing to both the translation and retranslation of Heidegger's texts and to the interpretation of his philosophy of translation. These projects often go hand in hand, and in recent years they have become so intertwined this it is no longer especially helpful to try to separate them from one another.

George Steiner might be said to have opened the phase of interpreting Heidegger's understanding of translation that considers translation as an ineluctable element of hermeneutics as such. His pioneering work *After Babel* first appeared in 1975, three years before he published a short book on Heidegger's thought, *Martin Heidegger*, in 1978. In *After Babel* Steiner invokes Heidegger as the thinker whose greatest contribution to the study of translation was to point towards a necessary violence, a point of breaking open a text, that forms the second in a series of four moments in the 'hermeneutic movement of translation' comprising of trust, aggression, incorporation

and retribution. Drawing heavily on the discussions of 'violence' [*Gewalt*] in *Introduction to Metaphysics*,[1] Steiner suggests the following image:

> The translator invades, extracts, and brings home. The simile is that of the open-cast mine left an empty scar on the landscape. As we shall see, this despoliation is illusory or is a mark of false translation. But again, as in the case of the translator's trust, there are genuine borderline cases. Certain texts or genres have been exhausted by translation. Far more interestingly, others have been negated by transfiguration, by an act of appropriative penetration and transfer in excess of the original, more ordered, more aesthetically pleasing. (Steiner 1992: 314)

It remains unclear whether Steiner thought that Heidegger himself ultimately fell prey to this image of false translation. Heidegger was certainly acutely aware of the dangers of texts being 'exhausted' by translation. He understood that unthinking and automatic reliance on received translations derives from and perpetuates the danger of extractive and exploitative attitudes towards language. However, Heidegger conceived of the necessary moment of violence as a disruption of precisely that flattening of meaning, not through an act of 'appropriative penetration' that is willed by the translator, but as allowing one's own understanding to be appropriated by the singularities of sense in the language that one inhabits. For Heidegger the contrast to exploitative exhaustion is not the creating of a more ordered and aesthetically pleasing text, which would be another result of the same kind of attitude towards language. Instead in the 1942 lectures discussed above, which were not initially available to Steiner, Heidegger offers his own image of how the translator should seek

to inhabit the landscape of language that resonates and contrasts with that offered by Steiner: 'The peak of a poetic or thoughtful work of language must not be worn down through translation, nor the entire mountain range levelled to the flatlands of superficiality. The converse is true: Translation must set us upon the path of ascent towards the peak' (Heidegger 1996: 62).

The contrast between these images of mine and mountain takes us towards one of the central concerns of Heidegger's thinking and a core debate in translation studies in the 1990s, the 'domestication' versus 'foreignisation' debate. In the course of a powerful argument for translation that does not elide the 'foreignness' of its source texts Lawrence Venuti points out in *The Scandals of Translation* that Heidegger responded to Friedrich Schleiermacher's concern that translation bring the domestic reader to the foreign text (Venuti 1998: 120). Of course, much depends on what one understands by the 'domestic' and 'foreign' and the ways that they are built and come to be. The appropriation of linguistic resources for one's own purposes offers a very different image of 'domestication' to the becoming familiar with a landscape through ascents that radically alter one's own perspective. Venuti praises both Heidegger's own translations of Greek philosophers and those of his translators, such as David Farrell Krell, for finding ways of drawing out the foreign in both source and target languages (120-120). The danger in this debate is not only the temptation to laud 'foreignisation' for its own sake, but the setting up of the 'domestic' and the 'foreign' as pre-established categories into which our experiences of translation can be divided. Heidegger thinks of the two quite differently, as essential elements of the ultimate possibility of the human: 'becoming homely in being unhomely' (Heidegger 1996:

115). That is, a never complete becoming familiar with the sense of beings through the disruption of established sense.

In 2004 Miles Groth's *Translating Heidegger* set a new benchmark for studies of all aspects of Heidegger's relation to translation. Groth traces the history of the early critical reception of Heidegger's works and what he judges to be significant mistranslations of fundamental words, which he argues have formed a significant barrier to understanding. He then sets out a powerful reading of Heidegger's own views of translation that draws upon a number of important sources, including the crucial remarks from the 1942 Hölderlin lectures. Groth focuses on the significance of single words in Heidegger's thought and translation He describes Heidegger's own translation practice as following a paratactic method, as opposed to the syntactic method of translations that insist that the proposition is the locus of thought, and he illustrates this method in action by following very closely the translation of Parmenides, Fragment VI in the 1951-52 lecture course *What Evokes Thinking?* Groth's central point is well taken that: 'Heidegger's translations are based on the elucidation of single words. He does not see the proposition as the bearer of thought' (Groth 2004: 141). This has formed a point of convergence for many scholars and translators of Heidegger's own works. However, Groth also makes some problematic claims, especially in his attempts to demarcate Heidegger's thought from Schleiermacher and the rest of the hermeneutic tradition. Most problematic, I would suggest, is the claim that for Heidegger, 'because thinking does not occur in words, the words that comprise a text are only a representations of an author's thought, which is the actual focus of hermeneutic activity' (2004: 116). While we may be able to agree that Heidegger would not describe thinking as a 'linguistic process', his

criticism of the tradition of 'representational thinking' is prominent and pervasive. From early on Heidegger continually emphasised the rootedness of thought in speech and utterance, and that is one reason that the translation of a work of thought cannot be thought as the simple replacement of one representation with another.

In recent years there has been a burgeoning of interest amongst Heidegger scholars in questions concerning translation, both in terms of the interpretation of his remarks on the topic and how best to bring that understanding to bear on the translation of his works. The majority of the projected 102 volumes of the *Gesamtausgabe* [*Collected Edition*] have been published in German, so that there is now a great deal more material available which directly or indirectly bears upon the issue. At the same time those volumes are steadily becoming available in translation, and in many cases retranslation. *Being and Time* is available in two English translations with a revised edition of the second (BT-MR and BT-SS), as is *Introduction to Metaphysics*, both texts that Heidegger published during his lifetime and that have always been central to any engagement with his work. Lecture courses from various stages of Heidegger's career that formed the basis for published lectures and books have also been translated and have enriched our understanding of his philosophical development. A good bibliography of the German texts and their English translations can be found in Sheehan (2015: 307-330).

Inevitably this burgeoning of translations has brought with it complexities in the reception history of these works. For example, John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson took the extremely significant decision to leave the term *Dasein* untranslated in their 1962 translation of *Being and Time*. *Dasein* names for Heidegger

that kind of being which has its own being as an issue for it and is able to open itself
to the question of being. The German word has now been absorbed as a term of art in
the vast majority of commentary and interpretation. In everyday usage and in the
philosophical tradition the term signifies the general existence of anything at all, but
Heidegger clearly wants to signal the specific structure of the word as appropriately
designating an open questioning being. The '*Da*' is now meant to say something
about the kind of being we are considering. Rather than meaning 'here' or 'there', and
thus signifying a being situated in a preformed and designated place, as it might well
in other contexts, a strong case has been made that '*Da*' should be translated as 'open'
and thus *Dasein* as 'open-being' (Sheehan 2015: 136-137). The situation is made
more complex by the fact that Heidegger himself asked Joan Stambaugh, the second
translator of *Being and Time*, to hyphenate *Da-sein* in her translation, when it is not
hyphenated in the German text. This highlights the structure of the word just
discussed, but it also creates confusion, in that this hyphenated word was already used
to designate not those beings that are open but the kind of being that they have as
open i.e. their openness (2015: 135). Furthermore, Heidegger hyphenates *Da-sein* in
later texts where it is unclear to what extent he is expanding upon or shifting the sense
that the term was given in *Being and Time*. The revised edition based on the
Stambaugh translation returns to the unhyphenated but still untranslated use of *Dasein*
(BT-SS).

Just as Heidegger's engagement with the philosophical tradition took the form of an
open-ended rethinking and retranslation of its grounding words, we should neither
expect nor hope for definitive renderings of such words in his own works. One such
word from the later Heidegger is *Das Ge-stell*, the word that Heidegger uses to

indicate the essence of technology. The word is used in this way in the well known 1953 lecture *Die Frage nach der Technik.* William Lowitt's widely read and very influential 1977 translation 'The Question Concerning Technology' renders this term as 'enframing', making an active notion from the usual sense of *Gestell* as a frame such as a bedframe or bookcase (Lowitt 1977). This coinage was accepted by most commentators until the recent translation of the 1949 lectures held at Bremen 'Insight Into That Which Is' by Andrew J. Mitchell (2012). Parts of these lectures formed the basis for the later technology lecture and essay. Mitchell renders *Das Ge-stell* as 'positionality', pointing to a number of passages in which Heidegger explicitly distinguishes the sense he intends from a frame to be filled with a content or even an internal structure like a skeleton (2012: xi). What Heidegger has in mind is the positioning, placing or setting [*stellen*] that can be found in a range of German words including *Vor-stellen*, representation, *Her-stellen*, production and *Be-stellen*, ordering. As Eric Meyer points out, however, 'positionality' requires as much commentary as 'enframing' to make this clear, and it loses a sense of something potentially menacing taking place (2013: 235). Furthermore, whilst what is taking place is not simply the setting up of one frame or another, it is not at all clear that this 'coarse sense of structure or framing' is not to be heard here at all in the word, as Mitchell claims it is not to be heard in 'positionality' (ibid.). The great difficulty for the translator here is that we are supposed to hear *both* the everyday sense of the term *and* find ourselves opened up to unfamiliar possibilities for making sense of things, each carried in the idioms that challenge translation. To this end Theodore Kiesel's suggestion that we render *Das Ge-stell* as 'syn-thetic com-posi[tion]ing' seems felicitous. Even whilst it is inevitably unable to indicate everything that Heidegger's term does, it makes its

own important connections that Heidegger himself must explain such as those terms connected to the Latin *thesis* (Kiesel 2014).

This same core difficulty in opening unfamiliar senses of familiar and idiomatic words runs through the heart of Heidegger's thinking of language and translation and to the core of sometimes acrimonious disputes that mark attempts to translate Heidegger's texts. These disputes have been recently focused on a set of texts from the late thirties and early forties, including 'being-historical' works, along with numerous notebooks, including the already infamous 'Black Notebooks', the first of which are now have recently been translated into English by Richard Rojcewicz as *Ponderings* (Heidegger 2016). The ongoing question of the nature and extent of Heidegger's commitment to National Socialism obviously accounts for some of the intensity of these disputes. Debates about whether Heidegger's philosophy was in some sense allied to Nazism even before the thirties often revolve around questions of translation. That the question will to one extent or another never be closed is related to the core problem of Heidegger's understanding of translation. He takes up contemporary, often political charged, terminology and tries to open up its significance, sometimes leaving it ambiguous as to whether or in what way he is endorsing that unfamiliar sense and what it means in each case for his commitment to the familiar sense. Much of the recent debate, for example, has centred on the translation of *Bodenlosigkeit* (usually rendered 'groundlessness' of thought in this context) in the much disputed §77 of *Being and Time*. Some commentators have tried to defend Emmanuel Faye's translation of the term as 'absence of soil', with the suggestion of Nazi 'Blut und Boden' [blood and soil] ideology, whilst others see this

as a groundless projection that does nothing to help in the actual uncovering of Heidegger's Nazi affiliation (Fritsche 2016; Sheehan 2016).

For those attempting to translate Heidegger's texts or read them in translation the difficulty is often stark. *Beiträge zur Philosophie (vom Ereignis)* first published in German in 1989 has already been translated into English as *Contributions to Philosophy (from Enowning)* by Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly in 1999 and *Contributions to Philosophy (of the Event)* by Richard Rojcewicz and Daniella Vallega-Neu in 2012. The difference between the translations is already suggested by the two rendering of the title words in parentheses. With the word *Ereignis* [event] Heidegger again takes an everyday word and suggests that its structure could indicate a new post-metaphysical thinking of what takes place to bring beings into their own. The first translation created a substantial controversy, largely because even with a lengthy translators' foreword explaining many of the translation decisions, it is very difficult to make sense of the English without extensive reference to the German source text. Emad and Maly argue for the inadequacy of earlier translations of the grounding word of this text, *Ereignis* (the list of attempts now includes: 'Event of Appropriation'; 'Eventuation'; 'Befitting'; 'Ap-propria-tion'; and 'Event'), on the basis of their misleading connotations from the history of philosophy (Emad and Maly 1989: xix-xxii). Yet these arguments are rarely as decisive as the translators suggest and in the end start to lead us towards the conclusion, quite at odds with Heidegger's views, that there could be an intelligible rendering that escaped all such potentially misleading connotations. Whilst one might begin to move in the reverse direction to Heidegger's, drawing out the unfamiliar in the familiar, eventually becoming familiar with 'enowning', as many readers have become familiar with

'enframing', there are limits to what can be made intelligible in any hermeneutic situation (see de Beistegui 2007). On the other hand, the Rojcewicz and Vallega-Neu translation is clearly intended as a corrective to what many have taken as the excesses of the Emad and Maly version. They write in a very concise translators' foreword of the unfamiliar senses of words that Heidegger opens up, that:

> [O]ur translation aims to invite the reader into the task of disclosing the new sense and does not presumptuously impose that sense from the start through idiosyncratic terminological choices. For example, what "essence" and "event" come to mean in the course of these ponderings is up to the reader to decide. (Rojcewicz and Vallega-Neu 2012: xvi).

The problem here is the danger of falling into 'literal' translation of the kind that we saw Heidegger frequently criticise, that is, translation that assumes that 'essence' and 'event' were in some sense appropriate translations and that the reader could be invited into the disclosure of new senses of these terms without an indication, beyond a sheer statement that the old senses have become problematic. There are dangers on both sides and they will never all be avoided. What Heidegger's own remarks suggest is that what is problematic in this situation is what needs to be cultivated rather than annulled. The movement through and between familiar and unfamiliar senses may not be possible in a single translation, and to follow the movement of thought that Heidegger initiates may require us to work between translations. This will becomes especially true as more and more translation and retranslations of Heidegger's work are undertaken and become available in future years.

Related topics

Schleiermacher; Derrida; equivalence; meaning; the translation of philosophical texts

Further reading

Groth, Miles. (2004) *Translating Heidegger*, New York: Humanity Books. (A very significant study divided into two parts. The first part is a history of early translations of Heidegger, focusing on English language translations. The author argues that mistranslations have contributed significantly to misunderstandings of Heidegger's thought. The second part is a reading of Heidegger's philosophy of translation together with an extended case study of his translation practice.)

Schalow, Frank. (2011) *Heidegger, Translation and the Task of Thinking: Essays in Honor of Pavis Emad*, Dordrecht: Springer. (This volume includes a wide range of essays on Heidegger's philosophy of translation, many of which connect his translation practice to specific topics and themes from his whole range of writings.)

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[1] See chapter 18 for a discussion of the feminist critique of Steiner's imagery.