

Interpretation as Translation A Gadamerian Perspective

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Abstract The phenomenon of translation plays an important role in Gadamer's hermeneutics as a model for what interpretation actually is and for what it accomplishes. This paper wants to show that, by characterising interpretation as a translation, the philosopher wishes to articulate how understanding is a mediation process that is linguistic in nature and that adapts itself to the situation to which the reader belongs. With regards to the philosophical inquiry about truth and method, the example of translation is particularly instructive because it illustrates how the interpretative reworking of a foreign meaning might be an legitim and integral part of its conveying, and not something like a subjective interference that ought to be avoided at all costs.

Keywords Gadamer. Hermeneutics. Translation. Interpretation. Philosophy.

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1 Introduction: The Manifolddness of the Hermeneutical Task

In Gadamer's hermeneutics, the phenomenon of translation gains ontological relevance as a model for the way in which we, as finite historical individuals, make sense of the world in which we live. Since it is through an explanatory effort that is discursive in nature that we are able to make something alien our own,

the translation process fundamentally contains the whole secret of how human beings come to an understanding of the world and communicate with each other. (Gadamer 2004, 552)¹

By highlighting the "linguisticity" (*Sprachlichkeit*) of our relationship to reality, the philosopher wishes to bring to light the universal scope of the problem of interpretation.

The intertwining of comprehension, interpretation and translation is, however, not a modern philosophical invention. As indicated by Gadamer (1974, 1061 f.), the etymology of *hermeneuein* points to such a connection since this verb originally encompassed a variety of meanings such as declaring, explaining, translating, and interpreting (both in the sense of oral *dolmetschen* and of textual *auslegen*). The intricacy of the hermeneutical task is further exhibited by the figure of Hermes: the messenger of the Olympians was not only the carrier between the human and the divine world, but he was also an interpreter who had to explain to the mortals, in a language they could understand, the orders sent from the gods. Hermeneutics is consequently not only the art of understanding but also the art of making a foreign discourse intelligible by transposing its content into speech that can be understood by the other. Schleiermacher (1813; 1838), the founder of modern hermeneutics, suggested that the task of the interpreter differed in degree, but not in nature, from that of the translator: in both cases, there is an *interpres* who *stands between* two distinct parties to ensure the proper conveyance of meaning between them. The German theologian, however, did not establish any significant difference between the interpretation of a text and of speech since he considered both as particular linguistic expressions of an author's inner thoughts.²

In this context, it was Gadamer's contribution to emphasise how the interpretation of a *text* presented a specific hermeneutical difficulty because, in it, language is detached from a variety of verbal and

¹ Hereafter abbreviated as TM for *Truth and Method*.

² In this view, we can recognise the influence of the romanticism of his epoch. See Forster 2010.

non-verbal elements, such as the author himself and his socio-cultural background, the immediate context of enunciation, the rhythm and tone of the voice, and the use of facial expressions and bodily gestures, that would contribute to the proper communication of meaning in the context of a living conversation. In a way, a spoken word already “interprets itself to an astonishing degree” (TM, 395), while the written word requires more effort on the part of the reader, who has to convert a sequence of dead signs into an eloquent discourse that speaks directly to their “inner ear”. It is because the deciphering of scripture transforms “something alien and dead into total contemporaneity and familiarity” (TM, 156) that Gadamer can affirm that “reading is like translating”.³

2 Interpretation as Translation

The fundamental task of hermeneutics is to make a text speak in such a way that its “subject matter” (or “*Sache*”, to use Gadamer’s phenomenological vocabulary), can be immediately understood by oneself and by the other. Translation, which deals with a discourse that is not only *written* but written in a *foreign language*, is consequently not only a model for the interpretation process but also an *extreme case* of it: it attempts to enable communication between two parties who do not live in the same linguistic world. According to Gadamer, such a situation can be especially instructive because it allows us to become aware of mechanisms at play in every understanding but that usually go unnoticed when the interpretative challenge is not as imposing. Essentially, translation should make it clear that the overcoming of the strangeness that obscures the understanding of a text requires a productive effort of *application*, *mediation* and *deliberation*. Furthermore, it should show that such an effort does not leave the “original content” completely unchanged, but that it is nonetheless at the service of the text itself:

the translator must translate the meaning to be understood into the context in which the other speaker lives. This does not, of course, mean that he is at liberty to falsify the meaning of what the other person says. Rather, the meaning must be preserved, but since it must be understood within a new language world, it must establish its validity within it in a new way. (TM, 386)

With regard to the general question of *objectivity* in the human sciences and of the *validity* of hermeneutics, the example of translation

³ *Lesen ist wie Übersetzen* is the title of a text published in 1989.

is particularly enlightening because it embodies an interpretative enterprise that is unavoidably accomplished by a fallible subject who is situated in a particular linguistic horizon, but that is not arbitrary. Rather, it is regulated by the authoritative guidance of language to which both the text and the interpreter are subjected. In the following sections, we propose to clarify what Gadamer wishes to teach us about interpretation by characterising it as a translation.

2.1 A Productive Application

First of all, the phenomenon of translation is paradigmatic for hermeneutics because it not only draws attention to the tension between strangeness and familiarity at the centre of the hermeneutical experience, but also demonstrates how this tension can be resolved by transposing a foreign discourse in a linguistic horizon the reader is already familiar with. Indeed, an important thesis presented by Gadamer is that understanding always involves the *application* (*Anwendung*) of the content to be understood in the situation of the interpreter. Hence, to grasp the meaning of a text, we have to “translate it into our own language”; that is, we have to relate it “to the whole complex of possible meanings in which we linguistically move” (TM, 397). Although the pietist tradition has also recognised that a certain *subtilitas explicandi* is an integral part of every understanding,⁴ in *Truth and Method* it is Heidegger’s analysis of the existential fore-structure of understanding that provides an ontological justification for this notion.⁵ In brief, it demonstrates that the *Dasein* that we are is inherently interpretative and that it can only understand something new on the basis of a certain preunderstanding of how that thing could relate to its own possibilities of existence.

An important epistemological consequence of this structure is that there is no *tabula rasa* in comprehension because our own preconceptions, which are to a large extent inherited from the specific cultural, historical and linguistic context in which we find ourselves, are always involved when attempting to make sense of an unknown phenomenon. In this sense, Gadamer affirms that every understanding is ultimately also self-understanding.⁶ Yet, he suggests that such a circularity is not a *circulus vitiosus*, a methodological fallacy that ought to be avoided, but an existential movement that results from the facticity of our condition, that is, from our embedment in a linguistic world that is “always already” structured with configurations

⁴ As noted by Gadamer in TM, 306.

⁵ See Section 4 of Part II: “Elements of a theory of hermeneutic experience”, especially (A) “The hermeneutic circle and the problem of prejudices” (267-305).

⁶ See notably Gadamer 1962.

of meaning that circumscribe our concrete prospects of thoughts and actions. Of course, that does not mean we should be allowed to uncritically project our expectations onto the text we are reading, but simply that no fruitful engagement with it would be possible if we did not have some kind of bond with the subject matter:

it is impossible to understand what the work has to say if it does not speak into a familiar world that can find a point of contact with what the text says. (TM, 439)

Nevertheless, by affirming that “a person reading a text is himself part of the meaning he apprehends” (TM, 335), Gadamer expressly puts into question an assumption that prevails in many hermeneutical approaches, namely, that a text can only be understood “objectively” if the “subjective” contribution of the interpreter is excluded from the process. In accordance with the methodology developed in the natural sciences, an interpretation is conceived as the disinterested reproduction, guided by a canon of rules, of an original production of meaning. Such a meaning can be traced back either to the author’s intention or its historical context of emergence. From a phenomenological perspective, however, not only is it naive to presume that the interpreter could step outside the horizon of understanding in which they live to apprehend the text “neutrally”, but such a request actually undermines what understanding, as “present participation in what is said”, truly is:

to try to escape from one’s own concepts in interpretation is not only impossible but manifestly absurd. To interpret means precisely to bring one’s own preconceptions into play so that the text’s meaning can really be made to speak for us. (TM, 398)

We have seen that a written document, as the result of a kind of self-alienation of language, is a strange phenomenon. We have also seen that the reader’s task is to overcome this alienation by reinserting the sayings of the text “into the living present of conversation” (TM, 362). For Gadamer, that does not mean reconstructing a past conversation, but engaging in a new one by allowing the text’s own claim to truth to resonate within our current concerns. Because understanding never happens in a vacuum and inescapably unfolds from a particular perspective, it always goes beyond the mere reconstruction of a closed world, be it the psyche of another human being or a fragment of a distant epoch. Instead, it entails the integration of what is said in the reader’s general knowledge of themselves and their world. While the implicit supposition behind the “psychological” or “historical” approach is that the document at hand is so foreign that it cannot be understood “substantively” – that is, with re-

gard to its own *Sache* –, philosophical hermeneutics maintains that the miracle of understanding is precisely that a statement that was once distant and strange can become absolutely contemporaneous. However, such a marvel is only possible if the interpreter genuinely takes up into himself what is said to him until he can find an answer in his own language.

Following these considerations about the mandatory *application* to the situation of the reader, we can see why translation would be seen as a useful model for hermeneutics. Indeed, the translator's task is obviously not the "re-awakening of the original process in the writer's mind" (TM, 387) nor the exact reproduction of a past occurrence. Rather, it is to produce a *new text* whose explicit aim is to be understood in a situation that is different from that of the author. Additionally, the mere fact that foreign texts are translated emphasises how some elementary preunderstanding is indispensable for the intelligible access to an unfamiliar phenomenon – the most basic requirement being the knowledge of the language through which it speaks. Finally, translation is exemplary for hermeneutics because it shows how bridging the distance that separates a discourse from the reader does not call for the strict exclusion of the reader's present situation. Surely, it would be absurd to demand that the translator, in order to be "objective" or historically and psychologically accurate, completely disregard the particularities of their own language and the horizon of expectations of the public for whom their translation is intended. On the contrary, it is generally endorsed that a certain adaptation of the original text, in accordance with the hermeneutical situation of the reader, is an integral part of what a translation is – and not something like subjective interference that ought to be avoided at all costs. In support of this, we can read in the *Translator's Charter*, as adopted by the International Federation of Translators (FIT) in 1963, that

a faithful translation, however, should not be confused with a literal translation, the fidelity of a translation not excluding an adaptation to make the form, the atmosphere and deeper meaning of the work felt in another language and country. (1963, 183)

If the fundamental task of hermeneutics is to bring a text to speak, the example of translation reminds us that no text really speaks if it does not speak words that can reach the reader.

2.2 A Linguistic Mediation

As indicated by the notion of *application*, the experience of understanding is characterised by a certain tension between the estranged language of the foreign text and the concrete situation in which it

can be understood by the reader. Gadamer's contention is that interpretation consists neither in the transposition of the self into an alien world nor the unilateral assimilation of the encountered alterity into our own horizon of understanding, but in the coming together of two horizons that, at first, seemed irreconcilable. In such a *fusion of horizons*, the interpreter's own perspective is clearly decisive and essential, but

not as a personal standpoint that he maintains or enforces, but more as an opinion and a possibility that one brings into play and puts at risk, and that helps one truly to make one's own what the text says. (TM, 390)

Such an overcoming of differences is possible because understanding happens in the universal medium of language, which is both the *middle* in which the I and the Thou can meet and the *means* through which meaning can be communicated. From a hermeneutical perspective, the language in which we live is not a tool at our disposal nor an enclosure from which we can not escape; rather, it is "the fundamental mode of operation" of our existence and the "all-embracing form of the constitution of the world" (Gadamer 1966, 3). Indeed, as long as we live in a common language, nothing is completely foreign to us since it is always possible to widen our (inevitably limited) horizon of understanding by asking more questions and to correct our misconceptions by seeking clarifications. The mediating power of language is noticeably at work when, during an authentic dialogue, two parties with conflicting positions manage, through a frank and open exchange of views, to gradually open themselves to the claim of the other until an agreement about the discussed topic can be achieved. The phenomenon of translation also bears witness to the incredible reach of this medium: it demonstrates the possibility of communicating beyond the frontiers of our own linguistic situation by means of the discourse of an *interpretes* who is, so to speak, at home in both of these worlds.

The translator, who has to reconcile the sayings of the original document and the resources of the target language, is like a mediator who is painfully aware of the fundamental discrepancies between two parties. Nevertheless, it might still be possible, through a to-and-fro process of weighing and comparing potentialities, of balancing a mandatory renunciation here with a fortuitous enrichment there, to find a compromise,⁷ that is, a "language that is not only his but is also proportionate to the original" (TM, 389). Much like our

⁷ Eco 2003 notably conceived translation as a negotiation process with losses and gains.

horizons of understanding, our historical languages are characterised by a certain plasticity and porosity, by their innate capacity to accommodate themselves to one another. In translation, there is undoubtedly a reciprocity involved: on one hand, a translator might be able to come closer to the text's original sayings by integrating loan words, creating neologisms, emulating idiomatic expressions and foreign syntactic structures, etc. On the other hand, the sayings of the source text might be viewed in a different light when transposed and laid out in another linguistic context. In dialogue and in translation alike, what is extraordinary with this "imperceptible but not arbitrary reciprocal translation of the other's position" (TM, 388) is that it allows for something that transcends the subjectivity of the individuals involved to come into presence: a *logos* "which is neither mine nor yours" (TM, 361) but that transforms both through the emergence of a common understanding.

Gadamer's most famous insight is that "Being that can be understood is language" (TM, 470). Language is, however, not only the *middle ground* in which a mutual agreement about a subject matter can take place, it is also the *means* through which reality is intelligible to us. However, Gadamer remarks that language is so "uncannily near our thinking" (TM, 370) that we tend not to notice its presence. It is the paradox of this linguistic mediation – thus qualified as *total*⁸ – that when the right words are found, that is, the ones that allow the subject matter to shine, it is only the thing itself that appears in front of us, while the means that contributed to this apparition disappear. Notwithstanding, we might become aware of the role played by language in the transmission of meaning when the channel of communication is somewhat deficient. Such is the case, for example, when we attend a poorly executed recitation and can not quite grasp what the text was actually meant to say because the speaker has not properly articulated the emphases and inflections dictated by the text itself. Similarly, a translated sentence not fundamentally rearranged in accordance with the genius of the target language appears not as a speech, but as a sequence of "letters without spirit", as "a pale map of a territory instead of the territory itself" (Gadamer 2007, 106). It is commonplace to say that the competent translator is "invisible";⁹ by that, we usually mean that the text they produced is wholly at the service of the original sayings, to the point where the reader should not detect that they are reading a translated text. According to Gadamer, the same could be said about the skilled interpreter, whose explanatory discourse is also destined to disappear when understanding is brought about. That such linguistic intervention has happened

⁸ TM, 118.

⁹ See Venuti 2017.

can nevertheless be attested by the fact that when we have truly understood something, we are spontaneously able to express it in our own words. In translation, the mediation of language is made apparent because it has to be explicitly and consciously created.

2.3 A Practical Deliberation

The conceptualisation of understanding as “a reciprocal relationship of the same kind as conversation” (TM, 370) is not only a metaphor intended to expose the alterity of the hermeneutical phenomenon by depicting it as a Thou who addresses and answers us. It is also a concrete description of the interpretation process, which unfolds as a dialectical exchange of questions and answers between the text, whose statements put into question the reader’s prior knowledge, and the interpreter, who can then ask follow-up questions until their rudimentary comprehension of the subject at hand is confirmed by the reality of the text. Hence, the “faithfulness to the original” might be the translator’s watchword, but the proper working out of the preliminary expectations with regard to the “thing itself” is also the “first, last and constant task in interpreting” (TM, 269). Gadamer notes that, when we engage in a genuine dialogue, it is not quite true that we conduct it; rather, we allow ourselves to be conducted by the topic in question and by “the play of language itself, which addresses us, proposes and withdraws, asks and fulfils itself in the answer” (TM, 484). In this sense, the conscientious reader is like the player who has decided to surrender the autonomy of their own will to the authority of the game and who then lets themselves be transported by the back-and-fro movement, which is “the actual *subjectum*” of playing. Indeed, we might forget how constraining a conversation actually is. After all, a question is less the product of our own volition than something that comes down on us, startles us and orients our thinking in a certain direction. Moreover, a question, even an open-ended one, brings with itself a scope of relevance that restricts the possibilities of answers. Put simply, the structural analogy between the game and the hermeneutical experience ought to emphasise that, in every understanding, a certain “margin of manoeuvre” (*Spielraum*) is granted for the interpretation of the reader while also reminding that this contingent contribution is entirely bounded by the overarching authority of the language in which this interplay takes place.

Gadamer is, however, well aware that the laws that preside over the realm of human behavior and communication are not the universal and immutable ones of the natural sciences and that deduction-based reasonings alone cannot ensure proper conduct in such a realm. For that reason, he maintains that hermeneutics requires a particular kind of practical wisdom that is not concerned

with the eternal truths of science, nor with the learned expertise of the technician, but with the capacity to determine how we concretely ought to act in view of the changing circumstances in which we find ourselves. Aristotle called *phronesis* such a judgment in uncertainty that cannot be secured through rules alone and that requires constant deliberation on the part of the knowing agent, whose whole being is involved in the process. Although the compelling power of logical and mathematical proofs cannot be expected in moral knowledge, it must be noted that, insofar as this “virtue of thoughtful reflection” is guided by the prevailing *ethos* of the community and by the general question of the good, it is not the mere expression of subjective preferences.

The dynamic and practical dimension of hermeneutics is particularly apparent in translation, notably because the writing process emphasises the sequence of decisions through which a first draft is corrected, revised, and perfected in accordance with the text itself and with the spirit of the languages involved. Echoing Gadamer’s use of the concept of play, the translator and translation scholar Paepcke (1981, 11 f.) compared the translator to the chess player who has the liberty to choose each of their singular moves while having to abide by the general rules of the game. Following the hermeneutical assumption that languages are historical forms of life that entail irregularities before being the systematised nomenclature we can find in grammar books, he pointed out that a certain freedom “in the details”, namely, in the choice of the formulation, is inescapable in translation. Indeed, not only can a word mean different things – it is the well-known phenomenon of polysemy – but it is also possible to express the same thing in different ways, for example, with the use of synonyms, paraphrases, and other forms of what Jakobson (1959, 233) called “intralingual translation”. The variability in the concrete use of language is further illustrated by the fact that the intended meaning of a word is not limited to the literal description inscribed in a dictionary but often incorporates emotional and imaginative associations that are, to a large extent, related to a specific socio-cultural environment. Consequently, when the translator is confronted with an ambiguous expression that does not have a perfect equivalent in the target language, that is, a term that covers the same exact range of denotations and connotations, they cannot do otherwise but

to decide amongst the possibilities that emanated from the semantic spectrum of the word, which one, with regard to the source text, ought to be concretised *hic et nunc*. (Paepcke 1974, 139; Author’s transl.)

The translator is routinely faced with linguistic conundrums that do not have a straightforward solution. In some cases, many possibilities might be acceptable, even though each of them would likely emphasise a slightly different aspect of the original occurrence. That does not mean, however, that a word can be translated in any old way. Instead, the best possible option has to be selected in compliance with a variety of textual and extratextual factors, including the context in which an expression is used, the general intention and tone of the source text, the internal consistency of the target text, the expectations of the publisher and of the target audience, the general do's and don'ts of translation, etc.

It was Paepcke's conviction, however, that the best decision is not made by a "transcoding machine" that has gained mastery over rigid semiotic systems. In his opinion, the proper conduct in the sphere of language requires qualities that are both specifically human and difficult to objectify such as intuition, creativity, empathy and a particular sensitivity for the sound and sense of an idiom. In reference to Pascal's famous distinction between the mathematical and the intuitive mind, he suggested that the translation competence should combine the *esprit de géométrie*, a reasoning power that methodically draws conclusions from clearly defined principles, with the *esprit de finesse*, a broader "sight" that can grasp multiple elements at once and see connections on the basis of ambiguous guidelines that fall under the guise of common sense and ordinary usage. Like the Aristotelian *phronesis*, such a "sense of great delicacy and precision" (Pascal, 512) is not a technique that can be learned and methodically applied, as it is a kind of knowing faculty that has to be cultivated within the knowing individual and that can be improved through experience.

To sum it up, the practice of translation is exemplary for hermeneutics because it illustrates both the interpretative leeway that is naturally granted in the territory of communication and expression and the restricting factors that are related to the use of a language that is never simply a private affair. In fact, Gadamer holds the view that, like playing, conversing, and translating, interpreting is a particular kind of action in which the subject is neither quite active nor fully passive.¹⁰ By that, he means that once we humbly accept to put our capacity of judgement at the service of the text, we are, to some extent, "acted upon", we undergo an experience we cannot fully control. Considering that the aim of his hermeneutics is to "discover in all that is subjective the substantiality that determines it" (TM, 301), notably by underlining how both the object and the act of understanding fall under the subjugating eminence of language, we might begin to understand how philosophically relevant the practice of translation is.

¹⁰ On the concept of the *middle voice* in Gadamer's hermeneutics, see Ebehard 2004.

3 Conclusion: Translation as Interpretation

In the context of a broader reflection about the notion of truth and objectivity in the human sciences, the characterisation of *interpretation as a translation* – that is, as a mediating process that is inherently linguistic and that cannot be brought about without “a present involvement in what is said” (TM, 393) – proves to be fruitful: not only does it highlight the universal medium of understanding, but it also indicates the limits of the scientific ideal of neutrality, which excludes from the realm of “objective knowledge” all those experiences in which a subject is personally involved. Ultimately, it is because Gadamer esteems that “understanding belongs to the being of that which is understood” (TM, xxviii) that the productive but ancillary task of translation is paradigmatic in his hermeneutics.

As concluding thoughts, we would like to turn this characterisation around and suggest that the conceptualisation of *translation as an interpretation*, that is, as a hermeneutical process that is unavoidably accomplished by a historically situated human being, could, in return, be beneficial for translation studies if this field wishes to obtain a better understanding of what its object of research actually is.¹¹ Obviously, there is no use in looking for a “translation manual” or for a systematised explanation of language in Gadamer’s hermeneutics since it was never his intention to prescribe a canon of interpretative rules. Moreover, there is no denying that phenomenological depictions such as the *fusion of horizons*, the *dialogue with the text* and the *game of language* do not, in their purely descriptive form, comply with the criteria of methodological validity. For these reasons, it is understandable why hermeneutics, especially Gadamerian hermeneutics, would often be overlooked in translation studies,¹² dismissed as a kind of “speculation without scientific value”,¹³ or treated with a “rather incomprehensible” indulgence.¹⁴ Fortunately, this situation is progressively changing, notably through the conjoined efforts of Stolze, Cercel, Stanley and others to explore how we can make use of the hermeneutical paradigm in translation theory and practice. The aim of this paper is not to address all the points of convergence and divergence between hermeneutics and translation studies, but rather to give an overview of the philosophical relevance of

11 A thesis advanced by translational hermeneutics (*Übersetzungshermeneutik*) is that their approach comes the closest to the daily reality of the translator. See notably Stolze 2003 and 2011; Cercel 2009a; Stanley 2021.

12 A notable exception can be found in the recent monography by Piecychna 2021, which deals specifically with the notion of the “translator’s competence” with regard to Gadamer’s philosophy.

13 Noted by Cercel 2009b, 338.

14 Piecychna 2021, 17.

translation, as shown in Gadamer's work. However, we would like to suggest, as a guiding idea, that Gadamer's contention about the human sciences - namely, that they are too dominated by the methodological ideal of the natural sciences, whereas they actually "stand closer to moral knowledge than to that kind of 'theoretical' knowledge" (TM, 312) - could also apply to a possible "science of translation". In this context, the contribution of philosophical hermeneutics would not be something like a new method, but, above all, a renewed appreciation for the ancient wisdom of *phronesis*. The recollection of this "know-how", which is both moral and practical, could call attention to the fact that, in the hazardous domain of historical languages and human communication, mastered techniques or learned principles can not spare the task of deliberation. In accordance with the phenomenological impulse towards the "*Sache selbst*", the idea would be to provoke a shift in perspective from translation as the *result* of equivalence-based transposition protocols that ought to be "objective" and "value-free" to translation as a *practical activity* that involves a variety of non-deductive reasonings and non-objectifiable competences and that requires active engagement on the part of the translator.

Following the path laid out by the aforementioned Paepcke, scholars have already advocated that, instead of pursuing the somewhat illusory dream of objectivity, translation studies should aim at securing a kind of "intersubjective plausibility"¹⁵ by ensuring the translator is capable of corroborating their individual choices with the help of the conceptual tools developed by various disciplines such as linguistics, cognitive sciences, psychology, communication theory and, one can hope, philosophy. While it is understandable that the relatively recent field of translatology would be eager to prove the validity of its knowledge with the help of objectifiable criteria and procedures, philosophical hermeneutics could bring to mind that translation is not so much an *experiment*, in the sense of a controlled operation that expressly excludes contingent factors to consistently yield the same results, but that it is rather an *experience* that includes its share of risks and surprises and cannot take place without the participation of a thinking and acting individual who is "a player and co-player and not a bystander" (Paepcke 1985, 161). In the affairs of language, a part of risk might be unavoidable, but it is precisely this risk that brings about the involvement and the excitement that makes understanding into an event that moves us and an experience that transforms us.

¹⁵ See Bălăcescu, Stefanink 2009; Cercel 2010.

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