The Limits and Cognitive Resources of Translating
On Paul Ricoeur's Hermeneutics

Edoardo Simonotti
Università degli Studi di Genova, Italia

Abstract   Hermeneutical thought suggests that translating involves not only transporting or mediating meanings, but also 'acting' on a communicative level, and putting different perspectives into dialogue. Drawing on the work of Paul Ricoeur, I describe translation as both a process and a task that we have to take on due to the plurality of languages and the opacity of meaning. In this sense, translation is a creative work of reinvention from a cognitive point of view. It can become a pluralistic paradigm, as a model of mediation, elaboration, and recognition. In conclusion, translation can be seen as an act of recognition of oneself and the other, as well as a gesture of hospitality and gratitude.

Keywords   Paul Ricoeur. Knowledge. Hermeneutics. Mediation. Recognition. Compromise. Linguistic Hospitality. Pluralism.

Summary   1 Introduction. – 2 Different Words, Different Perspectives. – 3 'Mediating' Languages and Identities. – 4 On the Concept of the Linguistic Absolute. – 5 What is an '*Éthos* of Translation'?. – 6 Conclusion.

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1 Introduction

In this article I want to explore some possible characterisations of translation when it is understood as more than an act of transformation in a strictly linguistic sense. While the connection between philosophy and translation has been investigated from many angles, it remains something of an open question. In particular, my aim here is to investigate this problem from a hermeneutic-philosophical perspective. Understanding translation as interpretation makes it possible to recognise both its theoretical-cognitive and ethical-pragmatic traits. Hermeneutics shows us that translating involves not only transporting or mediating meanings, but also 'acting' on a communicative level. It shows that translation is a dialogical act, which helps to recognise different truths. I will primarily engage with the work of Paul Ricoeur, since he has carefully analysed the question of translation and the many philosophical themes connected to it, such as those of language, meaning, dialogue, and truth (cf. Jervolino 2008; Canullo 2017).

The central idea of my contribution is that the specific linguistic-hermeneutic act of translating could become an important topic in today's debate on cultural pluralism, particularly if translation is understood as a form of knowledge and recognition, of self-decentering and openness to the other. I will also ask the following question: could translation be understood as a possible and persuasive model of intercultural communication?

From a philosophical perspective, translating can be described as a dialogical act because it has always to do with different points of view. 'Saying otherwise' means above all recognising another way of knowing. The translator approaches different languages and forms of knowledge: he transfers messages or contents from one linguistic-cultural subject to another, but we can also recognise his task – specifically gnoseological – of putting different perspectives in communication. If translation is both an encounter between languages and a confrontation between cultures, it involves at the same time going out of oneself, finding oneself in the space of difference and experiencing the reality of others. All these are conditions without which knowledge cannot be realised. Translation is an activity that makes it possible to go beyond what is already known and to never stop knowing what is different. Translation is a real cognitive challenge, which is both necessary and yet not achievable in an absolute and definitive way (we can never say 'the same thing'). However, in the following I want to show that, from a cognitive point of view, the impossibility of synonymy is not a defeat, but rather constitutes the condition of the act of translation itself as an infinite process.

2 Different Words, Different Perspectives

Revisiting some of the most influential research in the area, we can recognise the Russian linguist Roman Jakobson as having described translation as a metalinguistic operation of the transmission and transposition of messages. As part of the communicative functions of language, translation makes it possible to recode the content of the message and therefore its overall cognitive meaning. Translating means communicating the same units of conceptual information in different verbal and grammatical forms (Jakobson 1959). In the background we can recognise a kind of linguistic and cultural universalism that leads Jakobson to explain translation according to a universal model. But is the act of translation exclusively one of interlinguistic decoding? Translation is also an act of concretising the language, an individual operation of interpreting messages placed in texts and contexts that inevitably condition the meaning of the message itself. Therefore, it follows that this linguistic universalism does not allow us to recognise translation as an experience of confrontation with historical, axiological, and cultural systems that can also be irreducibly different from ours.[1]

On the other hand, Quine considers any translation as always provisional, because there are no units of meaning that can represent the common interlinguistic basis in the passage from one language to another; furthermore, there are no synonymous units of meaning. The meaning is not attributable to an isolated conceptual content or to a single sentence, but instead refers to a global, holistic dimension, a network of connections whose terms are inseparable from the context. Quine explains translation according to an indeterminate model. The translational process is indeterminate because for each signifier there is not a corresponding atom of meaning that supports the translational passages; the process is only possible in relation to the complete systems of meanings, languages, and cultures taken in their entirety. In this conception it is a question of defining semantic correlations between the utterances of the two languages, since the aim is not the translation of words but that of coherent speeches (Quine 1951; 1959; 1960).

Assuming that there are no universal significant entities, there can be no translation in an absolute sense, that is, translation understood as the transfer of units of meaning from one code to another. The meanings contain within themselves the history of the texts and the contexts in which they arose, and as such acquire relevance on-

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[1] The limits of this form of linguistic universalism are well analysed by Borutti and Heidmann 2012. I will refer to this study, which is important in several respects, especially in the first part of my contribution.

ly in relation to the overall set of signs of a culture. There are many possible translations. Starting from this perspective, it is possible to begin to understand that, if translating corresponds to being in the plurality of languages and cultures, then understanding the 'stranger' presupposes interpretative hypotheses that are necessarily formulated within a specific linguistic and cultural position. When we translate, we interpret the other on the basis of ourselves, of our own signifying systems. Only through a hermeneutic approach can we understand translation as an interpretative-cognitive practice of difference and plurality, both in relation to the other and in relation to oneself. It is worth adding, in this context, that even the constitution of identity presupposes an interpretative and translational distance from oneself and from others (Borutti, Heidmann 2012, 66).

In Gadamer's philosophy, the translational distance represents the fundamental structure of understanding. Indeed, it can even be considered at the origin of modern hermeneutics: it defines a separation, but also a meeting space. From a hermeneutic point of view, the translation-interpretation searches for the meaning of the text through the understanding that the reader has of himself. In this sense, we can also add that the self understands himself through the stranger. I interpret myself starting from the other. In the act of translation, what Gadamer calls the "fusion of horizons" is realised: it occurs as effective participation in a common sense, as a comparison and integration of different perspectives, beyond their specific distance (Gadamer 2004, 384-91). The translation is now explained according to an *integrated* model.

But from the distance of the interpretative and translating act, does an ideal increase in meaning and truth naturally follow? It could be that this form of distance becomes a cognitive space, precisely because differences can certainly meet there, but they can also diverge and clash. Each concrete language expresses certain perspectives of meaning within specific cultural contexts, even if the meaning itself is not always already given. By translating, we realise that understanding develops not just in a cooperative way, but also through conflicts, ruptures, and negotiations; so much so that sometimes it becomes impossible to reconstruct a connection of meanings. Thus, translation is not impossible, but rather imperfect.

Hermeneutics should then face a new task: it should integrate the possibility of understanding with the opacity of meaning. In other words, translation is not simply equivalent to transferring an original text into another significant reality; instead, the process of translating corresponds to an act of dialogical production of the text itself. All this does not imply the identification of lexical and syntagmatic equivalences; rather, it involves a process of reconstruction and integration of meanings, transformations, and continuous compromises, due to the opacity of personal and cultural identities.

As a form of mediation and negotiation, translation makes dialogue possible. It does not achieve a transparency of meaning and includes the possibility of failing to understand each other. Hence, it follows the need for an infinite translational mediation. The act of translating is a dynamic process of decentralisation and appropriation that seeks continuous compromises; it is not a static conservation of what is already known, but a reinvention, reconstruction of an open and living work. It rediscovers and reinvents reality; it expands and makes languages and cultures grow.

In my view, we ought to see translation as a sort of dialogical exchange whose philosophically most significant outcome is the discovery of identity, that is, the discovery of "oneself as another" (Ricoeur 1995). Translation can be compared to the specifically creative act of practical wisdom, which in the hermeneutic tradition is precisely understood as the capacity for confrontation and dialogue in concrete situations. Translation is a difficult exercise in negotiation, in managing possible conflicts; in this sense, it could be recognised as a concrete example of what Ricoeur calls "critical *phronesis*" (Ricoeur 1995, 240-96). A *hospitable* translation model is now emerging. Translating is "linguistic hospitality" (Ricoeur 2006, 9). It is the concrete way in which truths that come from different, foreign languages, and which cannot be uttered in one's mother tongue, are accepted.

3 'Mediating' Languages and Identities

In hermeneutical thought, it is impossible to ignore the problem of the possible opacity of meaning (Borutti, Heidmann 2012, 107), and therefore the possible untranslatability of the text. Consequently, interpretation is understood as the ability to implement compromises and negotiations, that is, actions that in concrete situations do not erase the difference and ambiguity of meaning. I propose to conceive the translation itself as an ideally normative paradigm within situations of contact or exchange between different cultures. Translation is certainly exemplary of the possibility of intercultural dialogue: the exchange between cultures is also given as an exchange of linguistic signs and meanings. But why should we see the act of translation as an ideal figure, a reference point for achieving effective communication between different cultures? Indeed, we know the possible 'shadows' that follow translational activities: some translations are incorrect, some fail in their purpose, some are misleading or misunderstand their source material, some might even be tendentious and biased; not to mention all those cases in which translating becomes a mode of appropriation or assimilation, so as to remove the unknown, the other, the stranger who is feared.

Just as in interpersonal relationships there is never a form of authenticity that is limpidly known by oneself and by others (people will always have some traits that remain unknowable and dynamic) (Larmore 2010), so in translation there is never a perfect and immediately transparent result (translation always remains opaque). I ask again: can the act of translation be configured as a model of intercultural communication, and if so, how? To answer this question, it is necessary to describe the translational act in all its complexity. I would like to propose three conceptual categories that allow us to see how translation can be understood as a model of communication in a specifically relational and pluralistic sense:

a.   as a model of *mediation* (§ 3);
b.   as a model of *elaboration* (§ 4);
c.   as a model of *recognition* (§ 5).

First, translation is a model of mediation in which the translator builds a bridge to connect two poles and bring them into contact. On the one hand, there is the work, the author, his language; on the other, there is the reader of the translated text; in the middle is the translator, who is an authentic hermeneut and mediator, who transmits a message from one language to another, trying to respond to different requests. We can repeat with Schleiermacher (2002; cf. Camera 2017) that the translator should bring "the reader to the author" respecting his "vow of faithfulness" (the author requests to be translated faithfully), and yet at the same time the translator should bring "the author to the reader" (for the reader is aware of how the translator can betray the author) (Ricoeur 2006, 3). The translator has to work to overcome the 'resistances' that emerge from both poles in question and therefore to achieve a sort of interlingual and intercultural reconciliation.

In this sense, the translator has the primary task of meeting the resistance constituted by the text to be translated. This text becomes the expression of any foreign reality that does not want to be distorted and wants to be faithfully mediated: it contrasts any type of appropriation, so much so that it sometimes claims its own untranslatability. Secondly, the translator should also overcome the resistance of the reader of the text, i.e. the resistance of the language into which the text is to be translated. It is a position of sacralisation of one's mother tongue (Ricoeur 2006, 3); here, moreover, an exasperated sense of self-sufficiency gives rise to linguistic ethnocentrism and cultural hegemony. In both cases, translation becomes a way to overcome these forms of identity-based resistance. Antoine Berman (1992) describes this double resistance very clearly and considers the translator's effort as ambivalent. The translator wants to push on two fronts: he wants to force his language to take charge of the other language; and he wants to force the other language to move into his

mother tongue (Ricoeur 2006, 8). The translation carries out a form of mediation, which goes beyond the closure afforded by two different linguistic universes; the translation sits at a crossroads where identity claims are mitigated and the possible tensions that may exist between the original text and the reader, with their different cultural identities, are relieved.

Translating is a form of mediation, then, in which a constitutive universalistic and at the same time pluralistic openness finds expression. There are two key reasons for this act of mediation. First, although all men speak, they speak different languages: in fact, there is no single language, but many idioms. Secondly, although there can never be a common universal language, the different languages are not so foreign to each other that they cannot be translated. Against any position of empirical relativism and any assertion of absolute untranslatability, Ricoeur suggests postulating "the principle of universal translatability" (Ricoeur 1996, 5). There is no doubt that translating is a difficult, sometimes impossible task. The foreign word is always an open challenge for us, because in any case it places us in front of specific segments of "intermittent untranslatability" (Ricoeur 2006, 6). It is also evident that translating is a 'drive' inherent in humankind, but one whose satisfaction is always incomplete if not outright denied. Yet, the translation continues to represent the figure of mediation, of being in the middle, of being in the balance 'between' different linguistic and cultural poles, demonstrating that it is still possible to exchange and identify equivalent and similar elements of meaning, and therefore comparable, if not fully corresponding, texts.

In this context, mediating means, according to Marcel Detienne's formula, "constructing comparables" (Detienne 2008, 22): translating entails building possible equivalents in the passage from one thought to another that is completely foreign, from one language to another that is initially untranslatable. From this point of view, Ricoeur pays particular attention to the philosopher and sinologist François Jullien, and especially his attempt to describe the Chinese language as the absolute other of the Greek language. To describe this gap, Jullien explains, for example, that the Chinese language does not have verb tenses because it has not elaborated the same concept of time as the West. Like the translator in front of the original text, Jullien looks for those "equivalents without identity" (Ricoeur 2006, 37) that allow us as far as possible to understand the foreigner.

Ricoeur was so drawn to Jullien's studies, in particular *Du "temps". Éléments d'une philosophie du vivre* (2001), that he wrote an extensive analysis of this work (Ricoeur 2003). Here he suggests to the French sinologist that it is not possible to relate cultures (for example, Greek and Chinese) by overcoming any form of comparison and provisional equivalences. In fact, we cannot think that there is an 'independent' thought or language that can judge all the others. Jullien

himself, when he shows what Chinese is or is not in comparison with Western languages, however, writes in French and therefore he too contributes to constructing comparables. Ricoeur proposes that Jullien use the category of translation, in order to describe the concrete mechanism of mediation between heterogeneous cultural-linguistic universes, between "heterotopic" intelligibilities that would otherwise remain mutually inaccessible (Ricoeur 2003, 214). According to Ricoeur, Jullien's work demonstrates that only starting from a particular language, in his case French, is it possible to designate a word with another, lexically similar one. Therefore, it confirms that his attempt to deconstruct the Western language through the Chinese one cannot be seen as an action that is carried out from the outside, by a hypothetical *super partes* language, but rather represents a moment of reflexivity of the language itself. Only starting from this linguistic self-awareness can we really begin to translate, that is, to de-categorise and re-categorise our own language (reflexivity) and the foreign language (welcoming) in a pluralistic perspective.

Later, perhaps thanks to Ricoeur's observations, Jullien devoted much of his time to the theme of translation, giving it a prominent place in his studies. What is his debt to Ricoeur? Similarly, Jullien begins from a sharp critique of the concept of identity as a static reality and develops the idea of a "cultural universal" as an unfinished process (Jullien 2014). Furthermore, by focusing on concepts such as tolerance, mediation, and understanding, he uses the term of translation to present his model of intercultural dialogue. Jullien goes so far as to affirm that the most suitable language for conducting an effective dialogue between cultures can only be the language of translation, that is, the language of each interlocutor: everyone will converse in his own language translating the other (Jullien 2014). Speaking a single language, cultures could no longer reflect each other – according to the dialectic of *Soi-même comme un autre* (Ricoeur 1995) – and their respective and different resources of thought could no longer be recognised. In an authentic intercultural perspective, languages will discover each other: every thought-language mitigates and moderates its identity claims and ensures that dialogue can take place.[2] I would therefore conclude that Jullien, like Ricoeur, seems to present translation as the only means by which it is possible to compare these different perspectives and therefore, as far as possible, to construct comparables. Yet, also in his case, the translation is never perfectly complete, but leaves hidden what is still living and incomparable in the languages themselves.

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[2] From this point of view, the tool of dialogue cannot be a mediating language, for example globalised English ('globish'), but the continuous and persistent action of each language and each act of translation (cf. Jullien 2014; 2021).

4   On the Concept of the Linguistic Absolute

Translation is also a model of elaboration. The translator is the first to experience in himself the two types of 'resistance'; he is required to carry out a task that is not so dissimilar to what in psychoanalytic terms is the work of mourning. Even in every translational act it is a question of elaborating an experience of 'loss', of defeat: it is a question of accepting the impossibility of producing a complete and definitive translation, and therefore of obtaining any form of assimilation or identification with the other. It is a question of accepting the distance between oneself and the stranger, which no act of translation will be able to overcome. In other words, it is necessary to renounce "the ideal of perfect translation" (Ricoeur 2006, 8).

The full realisation of the translatability principle is never possible. In this sense, there is no criterion that can absolutely establish a good translation, because there is no "third text" (Ricoeur 2006, 7) between the original and the translated text, that is, there is not another text that can be understood as the bearer of the true meaning and therefore as a judgment criterion to verify if the translator is really saying the same thing as the original author. From this perspective, we can ask the following question: is it really possible to think that there is a perfect and original language, that there are universal and common linguistic structures towards which every translation effort would ideally be oriented? Can we really think that translation is nothing other than saying absolutely the same thing, that is, a sort of remedy for overcoming the multiplicity of languages? Or are we to think that all this – that is, wanting to translate into a universal common language – is necessary since the evident plurality of languages would even be harmful from the perspective of evolutionary adaptation and would make communication between humans more difficult?

In reality, there is no form of "linguistic absolute" (Ricoeur 2006, 9), a *super partes* universal language that can fully bridge the distance between oneself and the stranger. A form of linguistic absolute is, according to Ricoeur, the cosmopolitan dream of the Enlightenment to establish a universal library, containing translations of all works in all languages. The purpose of this ideal is "to fill the interlinguistic space of communication and make good the lack of universal language" (Ricoeur 2006, 8). A linguistic absolute is also the ideal of a pure language which, as in the case of Walter Benjamin, constitutes the messianic echo that every translation would have within itself (Benjamin 1972). These ideals of linguistic absoluteness and perfect translation start from universalist and pluralist instances and have the aim of not absolutising one's own language, and yet paradoxically they lead to the forgetting of both the foreign language and one's own language. Those who accept this linguistic universalism

lose their homeland, their linguistic dwelling, becoming "language's stateless persons", "exiles who would have given up the search for the asylum afforded by a language of reception" (Ricoeur 2006, 9).

What else is involved in the act of translating? It stems from the desire to overcome anxiety that might be provoked by the presence of the foreigner and his differences, a desire, however, that is destined to always remain unsatisfied. In fact, translators can only continue to search for some form of equivalence between languages, rather than establishing definitive correspondences; they can only identify possible semantic and linguistic passages from one language to another. The activity of translating requires constant revision and rewriting. As Ricoeur writes:

> A good translation can aim only at a supposed *equivalence* that is not founded on a demonstrable *identity* of meaning. An equivalence without identity. This equivalence can only be sought, worked at, supposed. And the only way of criticising a translation – something we can always do – is to suggest another supposed, alleged, better or different one. (Ricoeur 2006, 21)

Between the two texts – the original and the translation – there can only be equivalence, never total adaptation, nor full correspondence. As happens in the relationship between the self and the stranger, between identity and otherness, so in the relationship between the original and the translated text, one cannot be reduced to the other. And precisely this impossibility becomes the condition of possibility of any future translation. The "impassable status of dialogicality of the act of translating" (Ricoeur 2006, 9) is the necessary background of the translation itself. A perfect translation would correspond to the saturation of the impulse to translate and thus to the interruption of the desire to dialogue. If there were perfect translation, there would be perfect understanding, and where there is perfect understanding, there is the extinction of the dialogic impulse.

In this sense, it is possible to argue that the act of translating can indicate both the finitude and the cognitive resources of the human being. We can then conclude that if the act of translating is based on this original anthropological-existential structure, then the will to translate cannot be removed, nor can it be extinguished by itself. Acceptance of the loss of the absolute translation is then the presupposition of translating itself; it is what paradoxically makes "translation as source of happiness" possible (Ricoeur 2006, 3).

5 What is an '*Éthos* of Translation'?

Finally, translation can be a model of recognition: a mutual recognition, where a reciprocal exchange takes place between the parties involved. From this point of view, let us ask once again: what does it mean to translate? The usual interpretation of the myth of Babel leads us to think that the gigantic biblical tower represents the image of disorder, of the confusion of languages and, therefore, of the lack of communication between men. In this respect, the myth of Babel "lets us imagine [...] a supposed lost paradisiacal language" (Ricoeur 2006, 12). But could we read this mythical tale differently? It could be hypothesised that Babelic multilingualism would not constitute a divine curse, that is, the consequence of God's anger and vengeance for the *hýbris* of men. It may be possible to think that linguistic diversity, dispersion, and in a certain sense the resultant incommunicability are not just defeats, but opportunities: the need to translate, which has been ever-present in human history, reveals the intrinsic human aptitude to learn and practice languages other than one's own. The plurality of languages expresses the richness of human life forms and worlds that are interpreted and communicated linguistically. Translation ensures that humanity is not seen as something undifferentiated; it allows languages to coexist, exchanging meanings and increasing the possibilities inherent in them. Babel could be interpreted not so much as a catastrophe, caused by a God who is jealous of humanity's success, but rather as a description – without any form of condemnation – of the potential of languages. Babel is not a condemnation, but an opportunity for thought.[3]

Here we see the development of a translation paradigm connected to a plural idea of language. To better understand this suggestive conception of language, I would like to recall some passages from the work of Hans Lipps, philosopher of the phenomenological circle of Göttingen, which represents in my opinion one of the little-known sources of Ricoeur's philosophical hermeneutics and in particular his philosophy of translation. Ricoeur recognised the relevance of this almost forgotten author, who laid the foundations for a non-anti-epistemological reconsideration of philosophical hermeneutics and affirmed the complementarity between the methodical dimension of explanation and the non-methodical one of understanding.[4] Lipps had the merit of considering language as a sensitive phenomenon,

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[3] The Babelic confusion of languages and the need for translation are considered in this perspective as conditions of 'differences' and therefore as inexhaustible resources of thought (Borutti, Heidmann 2012, 15; Guibal 2007, 61; Zumthor 1997; Marty 1990; Steiner 1975).

[4] More generally, Ricoeur affirms that the current relevance of Lipps' thought can be recognised in relation to the tendency of post-Heideggerian hermeneutics to reflect

which has a concrete, pragmatic, and relational function in the mediation of meanings. In this sense, it is not possible to absolutely determine the meaning of words, as if there were "ideal units of meaning" (Lipps 1976); rather, the meaning becomes accessible only when it is concretely realised through the relationship that men have with things and when they use words. Lipps' hermeneutic logic does not aim to investigate absolute and universal laws or interpretative structures (such as formal logic), but instead seeks to understand the *logos* with which man expresses his experiences and, in different situations, communicates with his interlocutors. The significance of a language is situational; it is the reflection of a certain way of looking at the world. Languages constitute and at the same time reveal specific *Weltanschauungen*. Lipps can be considered an important source of Ricoeur's philosophy of translation especially if we consider some passages of the work *Untersuchungen zur einer hermeneutischen Logik*, where he describes the mother tongue as an undeniable "legacy", an indispensable tool for becoming aware of the self. Equally interesting are some passages dedicated to the intrinsic situational and pluralistic meaning of the linguistic phenomenon.

> The refraction of things is different in different languages. There is a vision of the world that is specific to each language [...]. The language thus realises the form of existence of a people. In a foreign language, it is a foreign world that finds meaning. (Lipps 1976)

With an explicit reference to Wilhelm von Humboldt, Lipps argues that the single linguistic experience should not be seen as a monad, self-referential and closed in on itself, but rather as a dynamic and open process. The significance of a language is ultimately given in a fundamentally plural horizon, so much so that by learning a foreign language it is possible to become more aware of one's mother tongue and the mental schemes connected to it. In Lipps' work we find a hermeneutic conception of translation in contextual, pragmatic, and pluralistic terms, as an effective exchange and as a possibility of welcoming foreign words (Lipps 1976, 85, 95-7).

Here we can recognise quite a few affinities with Ricoeur's thought. It is precisely starting from these analyses of human language that he comes to revisit the myth of Babel: certainly, man communicates in many different ways, but he is also called to translation, understood even more radically as a condition of possibility, so that his action, and also his words, can continue to be. He translates to broaden the horizon of his language, activating otherwise un-

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on the conditions of possibility of its own discourse and not to avoid some logical questions typical of contemporary philosophy (Ricoeur 1981, 181).

used linguistic and cognitive resources. Of course, there are many languages, but there are also many bilingualists, polyglots, and translators. So we can recognise a particular universalist perspective, in which the universal is never given as absolute and pure (just as there is no form of linguistic absolute), but as a localised universal. Translation makes concrete universals possible and rejects the idea of a single abstract universal, outside of history. In this way the act of translating is in the service of the project of a humanity that knows how to remain in plurality (cf. Ricoeur 2004).

Plural thinking involves referring to cultural universals, historically localised, which translation helps to keep alive. Translating preserves rather than eliminates plurality. And even those who intend, in today's geopolitical situation, to justify the establishment of a supranational organisation will have to not only act on the formal level of political and juridical institutions, but also be able to integrate the ethical and spiritual resources of the different peoples.[5] What can really support the construction of this supranational reality is precisely an "*éthos* of translation" (Ricoeur 1996, 5). By translating, we discover for the first time the possibility of hospitality, that is, of living in another language and, at the same time, of welcoming that language into our own.

As such, the practice of translation becomes a clear example of a hospitable space in the linguistic field. But it is also more than that. According to Ricoeur, translation is closely linked to other forms of reciprocal hospitality between cultures.

> It is this which serves as a model for other forms of hospitality that I think resemble it: confessions, religions, are they not like languages that are foreign to one another, with their lexicon, their grammar, their rhetoric, their stylistics which we must *learn* in order to make our way into them? (Ricoeur 2006, 23)

Linguistic hospitality suggests a possible model of interculturality. Indeed, intercultural communication needs "translators from culture to culture", real "cultural bilingualists" (Ricoeur 1996, 5) who know how to navigate different mental universes and beliefs. From this point of view, the translator does not engage in an open conflict with foreign languages, nor does he aim to imprison them (through their detention or assimilation); rather, he is called to dialogue with nomadic and migrant words. The purpose of translation is then lin-

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[5] Ricoeur's analysis of translation can therefore also be used as a paradigm of democratic and international interaction (Dauenhauer 2011). More generally, the connection between translation and the ethical-political dimension is certainly significant (Chiurazzi 2013).

guistic hospitality, understood as a crucial prerequisite of reciprocity and mutual recognition.

> Linguistic hospitality, then, where the pleasure of dwelling in the other's language is balanced by the pleasure of receiving the foreign word at home, in one's own welcoming house. (Ricoeur 2006, 10)[6]

In the context of intercultural dialogue, an authentic, critical, but peaceful discussion is achievable only when following a dialogic-hermeneutic path – a task not unlike that of the translator. As in the case of translation, here too one must learn to recognise differences and, as far as possible, to make them part of oneself.

6   Conclusion

In order to share a dialogue with other perspectives, it is necessary to make an effort of self-critique, accepting to go beyond oneself and becoming aware of one's own fallibility and incompleteness. It is necessary to recover the notion of hospitality which means, first of all, holding different convictions. I believe that in this way it becomes possible to implement a concrete dialogue, an exchange that takes place – like translation – through continuous processes of mutual contamination and strengthening. So personal or cultural identity is no longer rigid, but exploratory and creative; it is understood as a 'translational' identity. By this I mean a 'compromised' identity, which is constituted through continuous compromises and negotiations. I am still referring to an identity 'at work', capable of de-categorising and re-categorising one's own perspectives and those of others, through strong self-awareness (internal re-elaboration), as well as through being open to different cultural worlds.

As Jullien explained, translating corresponds to an effective path of recognition, in which it becomes possible to manage any conflicts or misunderstandings, and at the same time maintain the creative potential of all cultures: "Translation is, in my opinion, the only ethics possible in our future 'global' world" (Jullien 2014, 248). In other words, the need for translation refers to a sort of ethical duty that would require cultures to work together, using phronetic-practical thinking as a guide. The model becomes an ethics that, like trans-

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6 From a significantly intercultural perspective, Ricoeur also understands linguistic hospitality as "narrative hospitality", as the narrative exchange of histories, memories, and testimonies; he describes this as "taking responsibility in imagination and in sympathy for the story of the other, through the life narratives which concern the other" (Ricoeur 1996, 7; Kearney 2019, 7).

lation, is truly applicative, that is, one that is open to situations and aware of the necessarily provisional nature of all solutions.

In conclusion, what can it mean to understand the act of translating/recognising each other as an authentic paradigm of intercultural communication? It means starting to conceive of it, with Ricoeur, neither as form of comparison, appropriation, assimilation, nor as a form of equivalent exchange. A way must be opened to explain translation/recognition as a gesture of self-giving, according to the specific logic of the gift, that is, as the anthropologist Marcel Hénaff (2010) proposes, "without price". It is a gift that binds without any expectation of restitution, a gift of response without obligation, as 'surprising' as any initial gift (Ricoeur 2007). It is a figure of self-giving beyond any logic of calculation, yet one that is capable of activating movements of 'mutual indebtedness'. But what does 'mutual indebtedness' mean in this context? It could suggest a dynamic and creative identity paradigm in which the act of translating (and of being translated) can be understood, precisely, as a means to better recognise oneself and the other, but it could also, ultimately, operate as an effective 'gesture of gratitude'.[7] Translation can become a persuasive model of intercultural communication when it is understood as *reconnaissance*, in the sense of a grateful attitude. It is an ideal destination, distant and perhaps unattainable, and yet one that can, despite the conflicts of history, produce some possible moments of authentic discussion, dialogue, and peace. Perhaps translation might even begin to orient practical action within history itself. We can but hope.

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[7] Understanding translation as a gesture of gratitude suggests the passage from a solely linguistic-cognitive dimension to a pragmatic and strategic one; in this context, translation not only transfers or mediates meanings but becomes a real 'speech act' that 'acts' on a dialogical-hermeneutic level, 'building' a mutual bond of indebtedness and gratitude. The possible relationship between speech act theory and translation activities would certainly need to be explored further (Tipton, Desilla 2019).

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