Philologist *Versus* Philosopher

On the Translation of the Philosophical Texts*

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Abstract—**The article concerns the principles of translating philosophical texts which have a number of particular features. Above all, that is the use of certain specific terminological means. The chief object and the main difficulty we deal with is looking for and revealing a correct translation for the philosophical concepts into Russian (from all languages). Hereby, both the meaning the author had in mind with the concept and the grammatical structure of Russian must be taken into account. That is why a close collaboration between a philosopher and philologist is required.**

Keywords—translation; interpretation; Sanskrit; philosophical text; meaning; concept

Translation of a philosophical text is a challenge, because the interpreter should not only know philosophy, but also be a philosopher.
Donald Davidson

I. INTRODUCTION

A scholar who deals with the philosophical texts of Indian philosophy often faces the opinion that philosophers engaged in translation and analysis of the philosophical texts in Sanskrit are not adequately able to translate them. One can come across this opinion along with the strong scientific argumentation in the scientific periodic or in the social networks. To keep the scientific style of reasoning in its purity, we will not take into consideration (as these critics do) the fact of the many-years' experience of learning and studying Sanskrit by the authors of such translations of the philosophical texts under consideration, and we will assume that their knowledge of Sanskrit is not satisfactory to undertake translation of such difficult texts. In other words, we will previously focus on the idea of absolute correctness of those who regard (for that or another reason) some translations of the philosophical texts from Sanskrit (or investigations of their peculiarities) as inadequate and nonequivalent.

As an example of such criticism, we will take some arguments, which are usually proposed against the so called interpreting translation [1].

Firstly, the authors of critical reviews put attempts of translators to keep non-transformation of a Sanskrit monolith text as incorrect. Instead, they suggest (and it is reasonable from the linguistic point of view) dividing a Sanskrit compound into its basic components. That should make it easier for a reader to understand the transcribed text. In other words, if a Sanskrit original sentence or compound was monolith, its Latin transcription should be presented in a "deconstructed" form, i.e. with the help of the punctuation marks and reconstruction of its original grammatical forms

which will be clear for the philological analysis. In our opinion, such a transformation of the Sanskrit original text is unacceptable if there is not any other indirect reason to justify it. The question is why this requirement, which is necessary at the initial stage of learning the philosophical Sanskrit, cannot be used for the translation of the philosophical texts and analysis of their peculiarities. First of all, because that is demanded by the principle of scientific correctness – if the original text is monolith, then its transliteration into other language should be the same. We will try to explain why.

II. THE TRANSLATION OF PHILOSOPHICAL TEXTS IN SANSKRIT

Firstly, the Sanskrit syntax is not so definite as some scholars try to present it, and a reader should have a correct notion of it. For example, let us consider the fragment of Chandogya Upanishada (I.6.7) - tasya yathA kapyAsam puN]arIkamevamakXinI. That phrase was differently interpreted by two philosophers and became a cause of their bitter dispute. One of them suggested the following interpretation: Brahma's eyes look like monkey's buttocks. The second one translated the same fragment in a different way: Brahma's eyes look like a flower of lotus blooming at sunrise. Both interpretations are legitimated with the Sanskrit grammar. This example demonstrates the fact that the free order in Sanskrit could be a reason for absolutely different translations of one and the same text. The same fragment was translated by a Russian philologist as "Brahma's eyes look like a red flower". The variety of possible translations can be put down to the so called grammatical static character of the philosophical Sanskrit, which we understand as the lack of the grammatical marks for the most part of bases and are used in the text under consideration. The static character of a philosophical text cannot be overcome (or shouldn't be overcome) by reading and investigating various literature in Sanskrit because of the very specifics of such a text. Peculiarities of a philosophical text are closely intertwined with a philosophical meaning of such a text. And as it is known very well, a philosophical meaning is changeable and unstable; it is not open for complete understanding. In this sense, philosophical meanings transform philosophical texts into eternal texts (or texts, eternally being re-interpreted) in which a meaning is always being created again and again.

The other argument against transforming of monolith Sanskrit phrases is that such a transformation would nullify all peculiarities of the philosophical Sanskrit, which have no analogue in all philosophical traditions of the world. Composites in the German language may be vague analogues to Sanskrit compounds. And analogous to the Sanskrit syntax can be American Indian languages syntax, which also uses compounds as proposal.

One of the most important questions of every critical review of possible translations of the philosophical texts from Sanskrit is the question of philosophical key-terms translation from Sanskrit into another language. Frequently, an interpreter strives for finding an equivalent for a Sanskrit philosophical term among the multitude of philosophical terms in the history of the European philosophy. That kind of

aspiration, which could be defined as linguistic patriotism [1], is regarded as utopian and sometimes as a sort of deadlock because it provokes or tempts a reader to look for affinity and similarity which are originally absent in the text: the terms acquire associations and connotations which have no analogues in the original text under translation. Yet, terms are known to be predominantly devoid of emotive meaning component. Although, there are some cases when they may acquire some emotive charge in the discourse. Besides, one should bear in mind that terms are mainly mono-semantic. Due to this factor, they tend to oppose the process of attaching more additional meanings to them.

At the same time, one should point out that some translators are guided by the principle that, when it comes to translating, the degree to which the text is rich in terms, its syntactical complexity, and the use of 'academic' phraseology is much dependent on the scholarly type of the source text under translation. The chances of using conversational, casual items or imagery in such texts increase with them being more popular thus overshadowing strict, matter-of-fact features of scholarly, scientific discourse, and making these texts look more fiction type.

For that purpose, one proposes "to give a reader an opportunity to try resistance of a text under translation, to mark some weak points in harmonization of European and Indian styles of thinking, to discover and explain all untranslatable terms » [1]. Despite the noble character of that task, we think to take Umberto Eco's idea to consider a commentary for an untranslatable term as ultima ratio (the last argument) of an interpreter as more reasonable [2. P. 145]: commentary/transcription/tracing are possible only in the case of impossibility of an absolutely complete translation of a term.

But let's consider this question from various aspects. Why do the realia of the Sanskrit language become secondary for a historian of philosopher and he allows himself some incorrectness? Why is the philological translation of a philosophical text worse than the philosophical interpretation of the same text? The answer is very simple: translation of a philosophical text must be done only by a philosopher because such a translation must be an interpretation or a philosophical dialogue, and in this sense it "doesn't differ from simple philosophizing" [3. P. 9]. It also concerns terminology and thematic units. In other case specifics and reasons for translation of a philosophical text in the other language are missed.

III. THE MAIN PRINCIPLES OF PHILOSOPHICAL TEXTS TRANSLATING

The solution to this problem – translation of philosophical texts – should be done at the level of interdisciplinary cooperation with the help of analysis of grammatical constructions, which are inherent for Sanskrit and differ it from another language, analysis of self-presentation of a term in a culture, i.e. the functional analysis of the realia of the Indian culture. In other words, it means using the method of "situational Hermeneutics", which considers the linguistic and historical and cultural features of

a text as ontological. This aspect defines the aims of a historic-philosophical investigation as activity for 'tracing' of historical, cultural, social and linguistic factors of influence on the systems of the particular philosophical traditions.

Applying philological principles to the process of translating terms in philosophical texts, one should always consider the actual status of terms (as the objective of translation) with the latter characterized by having an aim of providing a clear and accurate reference to the objects of the world, assisting in getting a univocal idea of the information by all the experts.

That explains why this type of vocabulary is to meet such standards as: monosemy, identity of the actual given meaning and the concept, systematic character, brevity, derivative nature, linguistic correctness, and neutral register.

Neglecting or ignoring one of these characteristics when translating terms is bound to lead a translator to the opposite of what he expected to get, and that is the adequate translation of the term and the text itself.

But we should bear in mind that one of the essential features of terms, and that is mono-semantic character does not mean that terms are *never* dependent on context and cannot be translated using some equivalent lexical items. What is meant is that terms meaning is fixed and usually stays the same, but, due to the presence of synonyms and interdisciplinary homonyms, the meaning of the former is guided by a certain lexical context.

In terminology, synonyms are of different nature and have other objectives in everyday literary language. They are mostly doublets. Doublets are known to be more characteristic of early stages of terms coining when there was no choice yet made which term was the best and there are still a few options remaining for defining one and the same concept. But all in all, it comes to terms synonymy that is traditionally regarded by many as something bad.

It is believed that having phonetic, graphical, morphological, lexical, syntactical and other forms of terms causes discrepancies in their spelling; this calls for the terms to be invariant.

Yet, in philosophical discourse (as well as in any other discourse in which a term is not an odd, alien item, treated as an occasional word, used figuratively), terms are abundant and what is more they play a pivotal role in terms of text meaning.

The correctness of translation, being the right choice of the word from many of those that can be used to represent the term in its different meanings, depends totally on a clear cut idea of what the text says, and that is the knowledge of the facts of the world and their names.

Thus, when translating philosophical texts, much attention is paid to context (linguistic and extra-linguistic alike) due to the fact that it helps to reveal and clearly define the meaning of the term.

Besides, it is of interest that there exists a kind of antilogy caused by the fact that a concept defined by a term is taken as completely generalized and devoid of any individualizing features, whereas theories and ideas expressed in philosophical texts can be fairly individual and subjective.

What is more, when translating philosophical discourse, one is to not only apply their knowledge of terms but also be able to follow the author's train of thoughts, just as they do in case of translating fiction texts.

To get a correct translation of terms in philosophical texts, one should take into consideration all the aspects of the communicative act such as: the addresser, the addressee and their interaction, the communicative situation peculiarities, the functions and objectives of communication [4. P. 4, 8].

IV. SOME EXAMPLES OF TRANSLATIING FROM GERMAN

Here are some examples of translation of the German philosophical texts that demonstrate necessity of close cooperation of various historic-philosophical methods of reconstruction and interpretation with linguistic and textual methodology. The clear demonstration of such a difficulty of translation of the German philosophical terms and of process of interpretation of their meanings can be the German notion *Glückseligkeit*, which was very popular in the period of Enlightment. This term consists of two parts: *Glück* (hapiness) and *Seligkeit* (bliss). The term is rather difficult to translate, for example, into the Russian language. It is also difficult to understand its precise meaning according to the German thinkers. Usually, this term is translated into the Russian language simply as "bliss". This translation was rather good for the Russian contemporaries of Immanuil Kant because, at that time, it meant not only religious and moral objects/state of soul/mind but also temporal well-being in its variety. But for the current state of the development of the Russian language, such translation cannot be regarded as apt [5. P. 739]. Despite the meaning of this term, which was popular in the 18th century, it has a very narrow religious or hedonistic connotation in contemporary Russian language. Both of them cannot be used for translation of the term *Glückseligkeit* because of the risk of its false understanding and using inadequate connotations. That is why one prefers to translate this term today into Russian as "happiness" [6. P. 260-264; 7. P. 127-129].

Another fine illustration is the German notion *Billigkeit*, which, in contrast to the notion *Glückseligkeit*, has been in use in the German language until now and rather popular among the German people. The basic meaning of it is the Russian word «justice» [8. P. 264]. The difficulty of interpretation of this term is due to the presence of another term in the German language meaning "justice", and that is *Gerechtigkeit*. This fact can be the cause of misunderstanding of both terms, sometimes even losing of some very important meaningful connotations which are structural for the philosophical texts, particularly for Kant's works where the differences between *Gerechtigkeit* and *Billigkeit* have essential importance. This fact forces interpreters into finding more successful and apt translations

of these terms and their connotations. Thus, the term *Billigkeit* was translated as "justice" [9. P. 257-258], but in the last translation of Kant's "Metaphysic origins of law" of "Metaphysics of mores" this term was translated as "equality [of aspirations]» [9. P. 1015-1017]. That translational decision has some textual justification. Nevertheless, this successful and correct translation in many ways cannot be completely inserted in the structure of the Russian sentence and the authors of the new translation of "Metaphysics of mores" often fail to use it in translation [9. P. 99]. Besides that, it doesn't cover all basic connotations of the term *Billigkeit*, and it means there is still no adequate translation of this term [10. P. 63-72].

V. CONCLUSION

We can see that translations of the philosophical texts needs some sort of equilibristic and keeping the gold mean in using of the interdisciplinary: the only philological approach in translation of a philosophical text is not enough for getting into the depths of the philosophical meaning. In other words, we need further serious historic-philosophical analysis and elaborating of the methodology of translation and interpretation of the philosophical texts.

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