Language, Translation, and the Hegemony of English

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Abstract: *This discussion begins from philosophy's tendencies towards forms of universalism, taking this as a backdrop for the consideration of ways that philosophy's own development has been marked by the vicissitudes of circumstance and translation. Such contingencies in fact extend to the very operation of language itself, albeit that this is likely to have been occluded by those tendencies within philosophy towards abstraction and the idealization of thought. Careful attention to examples of the problematics of translation within philosophy provides a means of seeing the importance of a different, more contextually attuned construction of the subject, in which a necessary pluralism of language and thought is more properly acknowledged. The necessity in the experience of translation of the exercise of judgement is recognized, and the importance of this for practical reason is stressed. This means that those who are monolingual may be morally blind, especially in circumstances of linguistic hegemony.*

The aspiration of Western philosophy to universality has been confronted in fresh ways over the past half century by questions of cultural difference. While in its most abstract central domains, and especially in its Anglophone forms, it may to some extent have insulated itself from such pressures, it has not remained immune. Thus, the work of Edward Said or Frantz Fanon may have seemed insufficiently philosophical to have a bearing on work in the mainstream of philosophy, but the influence of that work in the wider culture, in the academy and beyond, has meant that it has become increasingly difficult to ignore. At the same time, challenges to the mainstream within philosophy — the rise of feminist epistemology provides one such example — have also made it more difficult (or more indefensible) simply to carry on with business as usual. Another manifestation of cultural difference has been the increasing internationalization of philosophy as an academic subject, as well as the contribution made by burgeoning numbers of those teaching, researching, and studying in the field who are from different cultural and language backgrounds. Yet a further factor lies in the fact that philosophy itself, in the course of its history,

has scarcely developed in a unified cultural tradition. Its inheritance is marked by traditions of enquiry that, given the vicissitudes of circumstance, have sometimes survived only precariously. Its canonical work, however contentiously identified, has passed through processes of translation that have brought not only distortions of thought but also new and sometimes dynamic connections.

One response to these circumstances is to shore up the discipline: to hearken back to origins and to attempt to overcome the contingencies of language in an imagined purity of thought itself. This can bring with it a certain nostalgia for origins and, reaching forward, aspire to the establishment of a common language. That this last idea is a troubling one, however, is now widely recognized, and the dream of a universal language — whether in the dominance of one natural language or through the creation of an Esperanto of some kind — can come to seem a nightmare. It was against this background, and acknowledging the many ways in which an avowed universalism might cloak parochialism of a kind, that Hilary Putnam made the following remarks:

> [E]ven posing the issue of cultural diversity, and of the sense that cultural diversity is in tension with the Enlightenment, in terms of "religions" (perhaps the concept of "religions" is itself a uniquely Western concept) and "history" (a notion that has come to have a special sense in the West in the last two or three centuries) is itself unduly parochial. Perhaps we in the West have far too narrow a sense of the wealth of human cultural diversity, and perhaps this makes it easier for some of us to contemplate the idea of a world with one language, one literature, one music, one art, one politics — in a word, one culture (Putnam, 1995).

The views Putnam questioned were, in fact, those of some fellow philosophers whom he held in high esteem. Rudolph Carnap, for example, who tended to believe that "for all *x*, planned *x* is better than unplanned *x*", was attracted to the idea of a universal language. "Thus", Putnam continues,

> the idea of a socialist world in which everyone spoke Esperanto (except scientists, who, for their technical work, would employ notations from symbolic logic) was one which would have delighted him. And I recently had a conversation with a student who remarked quite casually that it would

> not be a bad idea if there were only one language and one literature: "We would get used to it, and it might help to prevent war".

In quietly controlled dismay at these thoughts, Putnam turns to the humility to be found in words of William James: "No one has insight into all the ideals. No one should presume to judge them off-hand. The pretension to dogmatize about them in each other is the root of most human injustices and cruelties, and the trait in human character most likely to make the angels weep" (William James quoted in Hilary Putnam 1994, p. 196).[1]

These considerations provide a fitting preamble to what follows, especially in respect of the need to count the costs and the opportunities that come through the multiplicity of languages that is the reality of our common world. As we have seen, that reality has been evident in the history of philosophy, where translation has been at work not just as a technical means of transferring thought from one language to another but as a source of slippages and accretions, in a process that, in generating new meaning, has contributed to the substance of philosophy itself. But what is translation? A closer examination is needed, so how are we to proceed?

What is translation?

A familiar model of translation takes it that the translator's task is to convert an expression from the source language to the target language while preserving the original meaning. But there are problems with this view. At its most extreme, it embodies three assumptions. First, each language is imagined to be clearly separate, autonomous, and pure. In a way this is a natural enough assumption. We do for the most part experience languages that we are not familiar with as opaque and systematically separated from our own. Yet a moment's reflection reveals the way that languages overlap, with etymological connections revealing links between words and common structures of thought, just as there is the common adoption of, for example, terms relating to new technology. Second, each language is understood to be more or less static and stable. The relatively slow pace of change from one generation to another hides the larger shifts that occur and the fact that, in its

[1] Hilary Putnam, "Pragmatism and Relativism", p. 196. These lines are taken from William James, "What Makes a Life Significant?" in *Talks to Teachers on Psychology and Some of Life's Ideals* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), p. 150.

everyday use, language is in flux. A third factor is that words are taken to correlate with concepts and that concepts are stable in spite of the variation between the languages that represent them. This assumption is manifest in the belief that the English "table" and Spanish *mesa* stand in a common relation to the idea of the table.

The fairly clear Platonist origins of this last thought need to be seen in the light of two further distinctions, which become manifest at the level of the larger unit of the proposition. The distinction between concept and word needs, then, to be related to a contrast between propositions and statements, and a further contrast with sentences themselves. Consider, for example, the English sentence "The bottle is on the table" and its French equivalent *La bouteille est sur la table.* Understood in terms of propositions, these two sentences are indeed equivalent. They express the same proposition, the truth-value of which is impervious to the difference in languages. The proposition is, of course, the stock-in-trade of philosophy in its Anglophone analytical dispensation, and hence this imperviousness to language difference has a powerful hold within the discipline. It was part of Foucault's achievement that he insisted on the need to examine not propositions but statements, taking the discourse regimes that enable human intercourse to be consolidations of thought within a history of statements. But what is a statement and how does it differ from a proposition? Certainly it is the case that to insist on statements is to make a move towards the acknowledgement of natural languages and away from the abstraction of the proposition. The crucial factor here is temporality or datability. "She made that statement when he refused to answer the telephone". The word "statement" in this sentence is not replaceable by "proposition", because propositions are not "made" and they are not said to occur at particular times. The word is simply not used in that way. The conceptual field it opens up is the timeless world of logic rather than the world of lived experience. Once again, philosophy's inclination towards logic reflects a Platonist impulse. While the proposition draws attention to logic and is understood primarily in terms of the binary of truth and falsehood, the statement relates to time and place, and is inclined to situate the thought it expresses in relation to lived experience.

It remains the case, however, that we have here, in our example, two sentences but one statement. In a court of law, other things being equal, the two sentences would be taken in this way. And so it is necessary to draw a contrast also between statements and sentences, where the latter term does indeed turn the attention to the difference between languages. Clearly there are two sentences here,

one in English and one in French. And this encourages the recognition of their different sounds and rhythms, as well as the different conceptual ranges and connections in sound that they activate. The reality is, of course, that our thought does not occur in propositions or statements *tout court*: it occurs in the sentences of a natural language. Hence, it occurs not exactly in "language" in the abstract, but in a particular language — in French, Japanese, Spanish, English.

At the levels of the proposition and of the statement, questions of translation are plainly hidden, and it may seem that they can be ignored or understood merely as technical problems to be overcome. At the level of the sentence, translation comes to the fore, and the philosophical significance of differences in the terms that are used becomes more apparent. Differences between sentences become more prominent where the text in question is literary in form, especially so in the case of poetry. But given that philosophising also depends upon natural language, this recognition should both weaken the ancient distinction between philosophy and literature, and undermine the retreat, as it were, to formal logic as the bastion of reason.

Different words, different conceptual schemes

Translation offers a way of reflecting on the relation between *different* conceptual schemes — say, between different cultures. This extends beyond different vocabularies (e.g. different words for "blue" in Spanish) to different structures of thought (different grammars). Consider the simple example of translating "I am happy" into Japanese. The middle-voiced *Ureshii desu* conveys a more generalized or diffuse sense of happiness than the first-person accentuation of the English. On the other hand, *Watashi wa ureshii desu* would accentuate the first-person in a more emphatic way than does the English expression. So the actual translation employed would need to be contextually sensitive, but it remains the case that neither expression is an ideal match: in other words, there is no ideal (no Platonic form) with which the two expressions might correlate. The recognition of this makes apparent the fact that what is at stake is not just a refinement in classification but a different opening of meaningfulness. This is at work in the most everyday speech as well as in the translation of philosophy itself. Hence, it is worth considering in this respect the introduction of philosophy into Japan and into Japanese.

When, in the late 19th century, Amane Nishi introduced philosophy as an academic subject into Japan, he coined the word *tetsugaku* (哲学). The assiduous

project of translating key works from the Western canon that was then undertaken inevitably encountered difficulties at every turn, and choices made then over key terms had a decisive effect in shaping the course of the discipline. As Naoki Sakai has demonstrated, the central and pivotal term "human subject" proved especially difficult for Japanese translators. The two possibilities that presented themselves, *shukan* (主観) and *shutai* (主体), carried connotations respectively of the epistemological subject and the subject of *praxis*, effecting a division that was more stark than in the uses of the corresponding terms in European languages. Hence, Nishi's preference for the former installed a certain conception of subjectivity at the heart of philosophy, setting the course for philosophy as it was to develop in Japan, with trail effects in other subjects of study and streams of thought. There is a degree of irony to this, as well as a further suggestion of colonisation. The irony lies in the fact that the idea of a *shutai*-like (that is, practice-oriented, bodily-conditioned) subject, the subject effectively occluded by Nishi's choice, is closer to the indigenous life and thought of Japan — a country that had not witnessed the revolution brought about by René Descartes and the rapid rise of science, which were such crucial factors in modern Europe, but that was steeped in religious and cultural practices in which such factors as behaviour, bodily performance and appearance, and gesture were of paramount importance.[2]

In his *Translation and Subjectivity: On "Japan" and Cultural Nationalism*, Sakai relates the distinction between *shukan* and *shutai* to a contrast in approaches to translation itself. Taking Akira Suzuki's examination in the early nineteenth century of the idea of foreign language learning as his specific point of departure, he explains how, during the Edo period, such learning was based in a set of assumptions and practices different from those in which it is typically framed today, and how it was oriented especially to the understanding of an ancient language, of China or Japan. In their familiar forms in contemporary schools and universities, the study of literature might be conceived in terms of, say, a literary-critical approach, and a foreign language might be learned for instrumental reasons only. In the earlier context the learning of the language was taken to involve an absorption of the textures of a social and political reality different from one's own, and in the course of which there would be a "cofiguring" of each. Such learning is closer to the experience of the novice monk, where one becomes absorbed in the content and textual practices of the language in question, including its characteristic disciplining of the body. One commits or submits oneself to its ethos.

[2] For further discussion, see Standish (2011).

Such an account of learning a foreign language is overtly related to the construction of subjectivity, with all the ethical richness that that implies. Sakai takes this to be "an ecstatic project", where "ecstasy" implies being taken outside oneself and a readiness for this to happen. It was "a project of moving away from and getting out of the selfsame that the figure of a foreign language solicits me to venture into. It is a project of transforming me into that which is not familiar rather than a project of returning to the authentic self" (Sakai, 1997, p. 33). In the contrast thus drawn, it can be seen that questions of the possibilities of the human are at stake, and these are matters of freedom itself. Sakai develops the point in relation to the idea of the contrast in conceptions of the human subject on which the present discussion is turning: "By *shutai*, therefore", he writes,

> I like to suggest the impossibility of full saturation of any identity and, particularly, of the agent of action, as well as an undecidability that underwrites the possibility of social and ethical action. Yet the *shutai* is not the agent of action possessing free choice as it is understood in liberal humanism because freedom is neither owned by it nor in it (p. 150).

Sakai's account makes it possible to see a kind of colonisation in the displacement of such an orientation to foreign-language learning and of the reading practices that went with it. The foregrounding of the epistemological subject, which maintains a more distanced and less engaged relation to practice, colludes in this. As was acknowledged above, the practice of translation is not confined in its effects to matters of such moment as is found in this philosophical example: the effects are more subtle and more pervasive. The practice involves the exercise of judgment on the part of the translator that may come to the fore at such moments but that is, in fact, there as an undercurrent throughout.

It is time, however, to combine this insight with a thought that was ventured early in the present discussion. Let us recapitulate in order to see where this leads. Languages are not tidily sealed off from one another; nor are they static. Their signs are open to the reactions of the addressee or receiver, who brings new connotations and connections to them. This is, it is true, the arena in which not just understanding but misunderstanding occur, and this prompts the unnerving thought that meaning can at any time go astray. But that way lies skepticism. The fact that signs are open to new association and connection is descriptive of what the signs that human beings use are like — that is, it is descriptive of language itself. Indeed, it seems likely that

the signs of animals work in a more mechanistic way and generally without the possibility of extension and new connotation. But animals have no culture. The working of *human* language, by contrast, is precisely the engine of culture, the means and possibility of human creativity. It is true that these are also conditions in which we can at times wonder whether we *have been* misunderstood, but these are the very conditions in which we, for the most part, accept that we have been understood. This is not a recipe for skepticism (that is, for the thought that "you can never really be sure"): these are the conditions in which human misunderstanding *and understanding* are possible, the condition of human being itself. Hence, it can be seen that the problems faced by the translator, who works between languages that are not simply commensurable, are not simply to be separated from the conditions that apply intralingually. In this sense, then, translation is at work in our thought itself.

In the remainder of this paper, I want next to give further attention to the consequences of this. Finally, however, I shall turn back to the question of foreign languages, but this time with an emphasis on language in its plurality, an emphasis that, as we shall see, will draw the argument more fully into the realm of the political.

The truth is translated

The discussion here opens onto the idea of translation as a philosophical and educational theme and as a substantive feature of philosophy of certain kinds.

In 1971 Stanley Cavell wrote what he calls his "little book on *Walden*" (Cavell, 1992), a text that puts emphasis on language, and on the movement of thought that takes place within language, especially as these qualities are revealed and explored in the writings of Thoreau. In fact, Thoreau explicitly describes this in terms of translation, as a remark late in *Walden* indicates: "The volatile truth of our words should continually betray the inadequacy of the residual statement. Their truth is *translated*: its literal monument alone remains" (Thoreau, 1992, p. 216). Thoreau's words are cryptic, so let me expand on them a little. "The volatile truth" would imply that there is something elusive about truth or perhaps that it flies away, perhaps especially when we try most earnestly to grasp it. Would this not suggest also the danger of too direct an approach to truth (say in the caricature of the philosopher's search for "The Truth"!) and that what is needed is a more indirect

approach and relationship (see Standish, 2014)? Certainly Thoreau seems to be echoing here a thought that is found in the writings of his friend and sometime teacher, Emerson. In Emerson's essay "Experience", he writes: "I take this evanescence and lubricity of all objects, which lets them slip through our fingers then when we clutch hardest, to be the most unhandsome part of our condition" (Emerson, 1983, p. 473). The sensuous qualities of Emerson's vocabulary here, with the onomatopoeia of "evanescence", "lubricity", and "slip" pitched against "objects" and "clutch", the soft sounds contrasting with the harsh, elicit a response to words in their materiality as signs that remains inarticulate when these lines are understood in terms of propositions and not sentences, and that is denied, or cannot be acknowledged, in the supposed rigour of conceptual analysis. They prepare the way for the more surprising, strange, and therefore challenging term "unhandsome", an expression that, in straining to say "unbeautiful", draws attention back to the hand and to what eludes it, with its anticipations of Heidegger's intimation of thinking as a handicraft. Our condition is unhandsome in part because we persist in clutching, expecting a firm grasp of things, turning things into "objects".

The continuation of Thoreau's statement with the words "should betray" has the force of implying that the volatile truth *in fact reveals* something, suggesting again an indirectness of understanding or a revealing that is granted where we do not clutch and grasp. The "inadequacy of the residual statement" adverts to the material nature of the signs we use, the sound-waves of our spoken words, or the ink-marks or pixels of those that are written. They are residual in that they remain there, however fleetingly, even when thought has already moved on. The idea of a residue is of something left over, of something that remains, perhaps as dust or bones, after the life that matters has gone away. The monument is "literal" in the senses both of its being a monument in letters and of its being only or exactly a monument — a material trace of the dynamic thought that was there in their creation, a relic of its passing, not the real thing in its life and vitality.

Thoreau says something of the distance between the settlement or fixation of thought in words, and the dynamic and sometimes elusive nature of meaning; the distance relates being to becoming. In a sense Thoreau anticipates thoughts that are to become current a century later. There are connections to Wittgenstein's writings on language games and what it is to follow a rule, as well as to the equivocations in his remarks about signs, where he writes: "Every sign *by itself* seems dead. *What* gives it life?—In use it is *alive*. Is life breathed into it there?—Or is the *use* its life?" (*Philosophical Investigations*, #432). And they relate also to Levinas's distinction, in

Otherwise than Being, between *le dire* and *le dit* (the saying and the said) (Levinas, 1978). While Levinas warns against a fixity of thought in which the relation to the other is arrested, Thoreau is concerned that our holding too fast to the crystallisation of thought in words may lead to a false security, causing us to cling to false necessities. If this insight is related to the earlier discussion of propositions, its salience should become all the more clear. The truth, on this view, is tied to a dynamism. Not everything can be simply shown. In thought there is a certain volatility, which is at the same time the element within which culture and creativity are possible — precisely, as we saw, the conditions of human being. On this view, the dynamism in meaning that is found in translation as conventionally understood is in fact, as I have tried to show, already there within language itself, not just interlingually but intralingually. The movement of meaning in translation from one language to another is part of the movement within language more generally. To the extent that language is constitutive of reality, this movement of meaning is inherent in that reality, and it is the means and substance of human transformation of various kinds.

Cavell claims that "Thoreau's book on *Walden* can be taken as a whole to be precisely about the problem of translation, call it the transfiguration from one form of life to another" (Cavell, 2012). The religious inflection that is given by the word "transfiguration" implies nothing other-worldly but a dimension of ordinary human experience. This is Cavell's sense of the sublime in the ordinary, or transcendence down. Thus, translation in these senses is a quality that is internal to Cavell's ordinary language philosophy, which is associated, obviously, with J.L. Austin and, less explicitly, with Wittgenstein. This is to see translation not as a metaphor for human transformation but rather as a *metonym* of our lives. This is a quality that is hidden from view where philosophy proceeds with too great a confidence in the machinery of rational scrutiny and reasoned argument, with logic as the bastion of rational thought, as this was put earlier, in the manner that is found in parts of its mainstream. To the extent that language is constitutive of reality, this movement of meaning is inherent in that reality.

Translation and the plurality of languages

Barbara Cassin's recent book, *Nostalgia: When Are We Ever At Home?* (2016), is an unusual reflection on the themes of home and belonging, language, and what it is to

think. The book's guiding thought is a contrast between the archetypal figure of the return home in the story of Odysseus with that of exile and the establishment of the new city in that of Aeneas.

The story of Odysseus' return provides one of the most culturally powerful images of home and belonging, an emblem and orientation for Europe. This is accentuated by the symbolism of the marriage bed, the heart of the home to which Odysseus returns: the bed is carved from a yew tree that is still rooted in the ground. His return is only possible after a hazardous journey that takes many years. Aeneas too will undergo a protracted and hazardous journey. But Aeneas' initial escape is *from* his home, from Troy the city that has been sacked, and this is a city to which he will never return. It is his fate that he must escape, leaving his wife and children, and — extraordinarily — carrying his aged father on his back. The place where he will arrive is Lavinium, and there eventually he will lay the foundations for the city that is to become Rome. While, after years amongst strange peoples, Odysseus returns home, sustaining his native Greek throughout, Aeneas does not return and adopts instead the language of this new place he has found — Latin, the language of the city he will have founded. His experience of and relation to language is then fundamentally different because there is already another language with which this, his second language, contrasts: both languages (and then others) come to be understood in terms of this contrast. Languages exist plurally, opening possibilities of thinking and an experience of the political to which the monolingual Odysseus has been blind.

This classic contrast that Cassin draws in the second and third chapters of her short book is followed by a fourth and final chapter in which Hannah Arendt's exile from Germany and eventual settlement in New York is examined. The contrast between Odysseus and Aeneas, which constitutes the most powerful part of her argument, is then extended by a discussion of Hannah Arendt's experience of exile. Some time after she had settled in the United States, Arendt was asked if she felt any nostalgia for the Germany in which she had spent the earlier years of her life. Her response was that she felt a kind of nostalgia not for Germany but for German. Her friend, the poet Randall Jarrell, quipped: "The country I like best of all is German" (Jarrell, quoted in Cassin, 2016, p. 56). As a mark of this perhaps, she never lost the heavy German intonation in the English she came to speak every day. Pluralism was alive in her experience, as in her politics, as is clearly evident in her writings.

It is worth reflecting on the further contrast that this then prompts, between her own thinking and that of Martin Heidegger. This is a contrast that in some ways

can be mapped onto the one already established between Odysseus and Aeneas, and so in this context it has added potency. Heidegger was obviously so profound an influence on Arendt, and yet the pluralism of her developing thought surely escaped him. He had paid much attention to the thought of Ancient Greece, and it would be wrong to suggest that his interest in other cultures ended there: his attitude to what he knew of East Asian thinking was almost one of homage (and he borrowed liberally from its ideas), but this was not without a certain exoticisation and mystification. This is demonstrated especially in his "A Dialogue on Language" (Heidegger, 1971). In this text, the two men in dialogue are identified mysteriously as "A Japanese" and "An Inquirer", the latter bearing a remarkable resemblance to Heidegger himself. The Inquirer comments on the mystery and unfathomability of the Japanese way of thinking, and attention is given to the untranslatability of essential ideas, especially concerning language. But the Inquirer fawns before the Japanese, revealing, inadvertently, so it seems, that he at least has understood something. But this failure of humility, its collapse into hubris, betokens an inability to countenance the alterity that would open the way for a plural politics and philosophy.

Heidegger provides a powerful vision of language and thought as in decline from time of the Ancient Greeks. This is a debilitation that is accelerated with the shift from Greek to Latin, with *logos* now divided as *ratio* and *verbum*, and with the dynamism of Greek metaphysics, as reflected in its vocabulary, arrested by the more static connotations of the corresponding Latin terms. The fluid gathering and way-making of thought in *logos* gives way to an idealisation of thought: dynamism is displaced by stasis, figured sometimes as origin, sometimes as *telos* — whether in Platonism or Russell's theory of descriptions. Yet, for all the richness of Heidegger's understanding of language, his thinking hankers after an origin; it is haunted by the idea of an *arche*, as his reaching back towards still earlier German or Greek sources indicates.

A century ago, Esperanto was the linguistic accomplice of this degenerate metaphysics. Evidently, the possibility of such a universal language was attractive to Carnap; yet now the very idea surely seems faintly ludicrous. There is a sense, however, in which a new possibility of a universal language is materialising in the form of the hegemony of English. This universalisation has come about less as a unified and self-conscious project than by default. The English that now takes centre-stage as the *lingua franca* is by no means equivalent to Esperanto, but it is a depleted language in important respects. In fact, the international language is not

English but English-as-a-Second-Language. This is not a snub to non-native speakers of the language, who may well be highly technically proficient. The point is rather than the language in question is severed from the the language with which most of its speakers grew up. It is severed from the language of intimacy and from the mother tongue. In many circumstances — say, where the focus of concern is on primarily technical matters, and where a common vocabulary is readily shared — this may be of little consequence, but in thinking in the humanities and the social sciences, it is likely to be of considerable importance. The lack of connection with the language of intimacy is likely to propel a technicisation of the forms of discourse current in those forms of enquiry. There may be a further danger related to this. This is that there are ways in which English, for all its unquestionable richness as a language in many respects, is particularly vulnerable to technicisation. Consider, for example, its familiar and somewhat stubborn ordering of subject-verb-object. Consider its lack of a middle voice, its limitatoins when it comes to constructing new words and phrases. And consider how these tendencies may be accentuated in the words of speakers already committed to what they see as technical purposes.

Of course where English is hegemonic in this way, the native speaker enjoys an advantage in certain respects — especially in academic circumstances where there is competition over getting published. But that advantage comes also with a kind of complacency: for many native speakers there will be little practical point in learning a foreign language because so often the non-native speakers encountered will have a command of English that outstrips whatever foreign language the native speaker might attempt. But if the argument advanced above is right, then those who operate in contexts that require them to speak a language that is not their own are compelled to exercise and develop their judgement continually, around problematic key terms and in the course of the everyday. That exercise of judgment, where no rule applies, where systems of thinking are not fully commensurable, is in fact exemplary for judgement in our wider practical lives — which is to say it is relevant to our moral experience. This is to recognise in the monolingual person limitations of which they may be unaware. Judgement of this kind — between incommensurables, and where each move opens new paths for thought — extends to the most important matters in our lives. It involves an exercise of thought to which the monolingual person may be morally blind.

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