

Translation and Seventeenth-Century Philosophy.  
Some considerations of the impact of translation on British philosophy,  
with particular reference to Ralph Cudworth.

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***Abstract:** The seventeenth century was the period when philosophers abandoned Latin in favour of the vernacular as the language of philosophy. I draw on the notion of “cultural transfer” in order to highlight the role of translation in some of the conceptual developments in philosophy in this period. I illustrate this in the case of Ralph Cudworth (1617–1688), who was one of the first English philosophers to write entirely in the vernacular. I commence with a brief survey the period, from antiquity to the Renaissance when Latin was the language of philosophy. I then argue that the shift to the vernacular gave a new importance to translation as a means of philosophical communication. But this vernacular turn had its challenges. Whereas previously translation into the vernacular had been essential for reaching a lay audience, now translation into Latin became a necessity for intellectual exchange within the international philosophical community. Another challenge was how to develop a conceptual vocabulary where none had existed previously. I illustrate this with the example of Cudworth. I argue that translation from classical languages played a crucial creative role in his formulation of some of his most original philosophical ideas, in particular his concepts of consciousness and unconsciousness.*

## **Introduction**

Philosophy thrives on intellectual exchange. Intellectual exchange requires a common language, or, failing that, translation from one language to another. In this paper I consider the role of translation in philosophy from a historical perspective, by discussing philosophical translation and seventeenth-century British philosophy. The seventeenth century was the period which saw the transition from Latin to vernacular languages in philosophy throughout Europe, a process which might be called the “vernacular turn” in philosophy. I shall discuss the impact of translation

on early modern philosophy, by examining some of the first British philosophers to write in the vernacular. In so doing, I shall draw on the historical notion of “cultural transfer” which has been developed by historians to study intellectual and cultural relations. “Cultural transfer”, as opposed to mere exchange or circulation of ideas, is conceived a multi-directional process of interchange, which entails active participation of recipients, such that a change of context results in transformation through re-conception, re-interpretation and re-application of ideas. This is highlighted by attention to the means or “vectors” of transfer, as much as the elements transferred. Translation may be considered such a “vector”. I shall begin with an overview of translation in the history of European philosophy from antiquity to the Renaissance. After a survey of vernacular and Latin translations of English language philosophy, I shall consider the role of translation in some of the conceptual transformations in philosophy itself by means of a case study of one of the first philosophers to write solely in English, Ralph Cudworth, the philosopher who is credited with introducing the term “consciousness” into English philosophical terminology. By examining the relationship between vernacular and classical philosophical terminology in Cudworth’s philosophical vocabulary, I shall argue that translation plays a key part in Cudworth’s articulation of his philosophy of mind.

### **The Language of Philosophy from the Greeks and to the Renaissance:**

Historically, in unbroken continuity from Roman times to the early modern period, the language of intellectual activity in Europe was Latin. Latin became the language of philosophy when the Romans learned philosophy from the Greeks: when the Roman statesman and lawyer, Marcus Tullius Cicero, consciously set out to emulate Greek philosophy using the Latin language — as he put it, to “teach philosophy to speak Latin” (*Tusculan Disputations* 2.3).<sup>1</sup> Arguably, therefore, the Western European philosophical tradition originated through translation. This is registered in terminology we use today. The names of the branches of philosophy (physics, metaphysics, epistemology, ethics) derive from Greek via Latin. Much of our conceptual vocabulary, especially logic (e.g. *sylogism*, *enthymeme*, *paradigm*,

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<sup>1</sup> Han Baltussen, “Personal Mission or Public Service” in *Complicating the History of Western Translation: The Ancient Mediterranean in Perspective*, in Siobhán McElduff and Enrica Sciarrino (eds.), (London: Routledge, 2014).

*eudaimonia*) is imported from Greek. Even the word “philosophy” comes from Greek. Other philosophical terms originate from Latin (e.g. *cause*, *intellect*, *morality*). In fact, most of the abstract terminology in the English language derives from Latin (e.g. *rationality*, *abstraction*, *multiplication*). Many of these terms enter philosophy as wholesale importations from Greek and Latin.

Thanks to the cultural importance of Rome from antiquity through the Middle Ages, Latin remained the common language of intellectual exchange, transforming from a vernacular which was common currency to all people, to becoming a specialist language used by educated people. As such it was a living language which developed to meet the needs of the specialists. Latin would become, as Guido Giglioni puts it, “a privileged medium that allowed a trans-national, trans-linguistic, and trans-cultural discussion and transmission of ideas”.<sup>2</sup> Since philosophers had a common language, with an inherited conceptual vocabulary, translation was not a necessary pre-condition for philosophical interchange across linguistic borders. But this changes in the seventeenth century, with the shift to the vernacular as the medium of intellectual exchange. This vernacular turn affects philosophy no less than other fields of human learning. Although many seventeenth-century philosophers continued to write primarily or partly in Latin (e.g. Bacon, Descartes and Hobbes), the vernacular was used increasingly as the primary language for philosophy (e.g. by Locke and Malebranche), a development which gives translation an increasingly important role as a vector of intellectual interchange.

### **Philosophy in Latin: a Common Heritage**

Ever since Roman times, philosophy and translation were integrally inter-related. Cicero’s successful transposition of philosophy from Greek into Latin, helped to make Latin the *lingua franca* of philosophy for several centuries, obviating the need for translation. Cicero’s coinages included many terms which have survived to this day: *vacuum* (void), *qualitas* (suchness), *assensio* (assent), *individuum* (atom).<sup>3</sup> But Latin did not remain static. After the fall of the Roman Empire, it was not a “dead” language, because its continued use meant continual development. In philosophy, we

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<sup>2</sup> Guido Giglioni, “Philosophy”, in Sarah Knight and Stefan Tilg (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Neo-Latin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 249–62, p. 260.

<sup>3</sup> Baltussen “Personal Mission”; G. F. Powell (ed.), *Cicero the Philosopher* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), especially his “Cicero’s translations from Greek”.

see the emergence of the highly specialist technical vocabulary of medieval scholasticism.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, translation continued to play a role: Latin philosophy was invigorated by two key sources which required translation. The first of these was the transmission of Aristotelian texts and commentaries from Arabic: Arabic translations of Aristotle, and the Latin translations of those works and their Arabic commentators.<sup>5</sup> In this respect much of this medieval philosophy was indebted to translation. The second great age of philosophical translation was the Renaissance. This golden age of translation was made possible by the movement known as Humanism. The humanists took a new interest in the ancient past. In order to access the writings of ancient Greece and Rome, they developed new tools of scholarship, and set new standards for translation. In philosophy, the impact of humanism is most apparent in the humanist recovery of ancient Greek texts, many of which had been unknown in the Middle Ages.<sup>6</sup> The most notable example is Marsilio Ficino's translation of the entire Thrasyllan canon of the works of Plato, for which like Cicero before him, he had to find a suitable idiom in Latin. Prior to this Plato was known largely through a partial translation of his *Timaeus*. Other philosophers, notably Aristotle, were re-translated directly from the Greek. (e.g. Leonardo Bruni's translations of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics*). Later humanists, such as Alessandro Piccolomini turned their attention to vernacular translations of classical philosophy, although vernacular translation was not highly valued by most humanists.<sup>7</sup> Thus one of the great contributions of Renaissance humanists was the

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<sup>4</sup> Tullio Gregory, *Origini della terminologia filosofica moderna: Linee di ricerca* (Florence: Olschki, 2006.), especially "Alle origini della terminologia filosofica moderna: traduzioni, calchi, neologismi", 33–75, which was first published in *Giornale critic della filosofia italiana* 83 (2004), 353–81). For the rich contribution of medieval Latin to philosophical terminology see Jacqueline Hamesse (ed.), *Aux origines du lexique philosophique européen: l'influence de la Latinitas: actes du colloque international* (Louvain-la-Neuve: Fédération internationale des instituts d'études médiévales, 1997), in particular, Alain de Libera, "Le latin, véritable langue de la philosophie", *ibid*, 1–22.

<sup>5</sup> Dag Nikolaus Hasse, "Influence of Arabic and Islamic Philosophy on the Latin West", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2014/entries/arabic-islamic-influence/>>. consulted 2 August 2017. Charles Burnett, "Arabic into Latin: the reception of Arabic philosophy into Western Europe", in P. Adamson and R.C. Taylor (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 370–404.

<sup>6</sup> *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism*, edited by Jill Kraye (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

<sup>7</sup> See Luca Bianchi, Simon Gilson and Jill Kraye, *Vernacular Aristotelianism in Italy from the Fourteenth to the Seventeenth Century* (London: Warburg Institute, 2016); Warren Boutcher, "Vernacular Humanism in the sixteenth century", in Kraye (ed.), *Renaissance*

production of more accurate editions of original texts of ancient philosophy in both Greek and Latin. The humanist recovery of Greek philosophy, vastly increased the pantheon of philosophers making many known who had been either unknown or only partially known before (Plato, Plotinus, Proclus, Sextus Empiricus). Rather less appreciated is that through vernacular translation of classical philosophers, they enhanced the accessibility of philosophy for wider audiences.

### **Ciceronian Latin**

Paradoxically, Cicero served as a model for both the philologists and rhetoricians, and the philosophers. In pursuing their programme of translation, humanist scholars had the example of Cicero before them, who furnished not just a standard of Latin language, but a model for making Greek philosophy “speak Latin” (*Tusc* 2.3). Just as the stylists used Cicero as a model for how to write Latin, so Renaissance philosophers could appeal to Cicero’s own preparedness to take linguistic liberties in coining new terms in order to forge a technical vocabulary for philosophy. The humanists of the Renaissance purged Latin of what they considered to be medieval scholastic barbarisms, in order to restore the language to its original Roman purity. Their favourite stylistic model was Cicero (the excesses of Renaissance “Ciceronianism” were satirised in Erasmus of Rotterdam’s *Ciceronianus*, 1528).<sup>8</sup> In fact, much of what the humanists stripped out was a highly developed specialist philosophical vocabulary, replete with terms coined for philosophical purposes (terms such as *quidditas*). Lorenzo Valla deplored the Latin coinages of Boethius.<sup>9</sup> However, this linguistic and stylistic turn met with opposition among philosophers, who defended the retention of non-classical philosophical Latin. For example, in a letter to the humanist Ermolao Barbaro, the Italian philosopher Pico della Mirandola defended the use of philosophical terminology coined by medieval philosophers.<sup>10</sup>

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*Humanism*, 189–202. For debates on the relative value of vernacular and Latin in the Renaissance, see Eugenio Refini, “‘By Imitating our Nurses’. Latin and Vernacular in the Renaissance”, in William Caferro (ed.), *The Routledge History of the Renaissance* (Abingdon: Taylor & Francis, 2017), 46–61.

<sup>8</sup> Keith Sidwell, “Classical Latin — Medieval Latin — Neo Latin”, in Knight and Tilg (eds.), *Oxford Handbook of Neo-Latin*, 13–26, p. 21.

<sup>9</sup> See Carlotta Dionisotti, “Philosophie grecque et tradition latine”, in Hamesse (ed.), *Aux origines*, 41–57.

<sup>10</sup> Jill Kraye, “Philologists and Philosophers”, in Kraye (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism*, 142–60. Also Giglioli, “Philosophy”.

The legacy of humanism to early modern European philosophy is usually overlooked in histories of philosophy. Given the shift to the vernacular in seventeenth-century philosophy, it is easy to ignore it. However, humanists made an impact on later philosophy in a number of ways. As already mentioned, by producing reliable editions and translations of ancient philosophical works they massively increased the repertoire of ancient philosophy available to seventeenth-century philosophers. The new standards which they set for translation impacted on subsequent translations into the vernacular. The humanists' rejection of the highly specialised conceptual vocabulary of medieval scholastic philosophy anticipates the new philosophers of the seventeenth century who shared the philological purists' characterisation of scholastic philosophy as "barbarism", and shared the ideal of stylistic lucidity prized by Cicero. Although medieval Latin philosophical terms retain their hold, by the end of the sixteenth century, every philosopher educated at university learned Ciceronian Latin and encountered Greek philosophers in their own language. This applies even to those, like Bacon and Descartes, who attempted to renew philosophy by claiming to make a break with the past. However much or little Greek they knew, all philosophers had a grounding in philosophical Latin, usually through a grounding in Aristotelianism. Latin remained the *lingua franca* of Europe, and it continued to hold its own among the highly educated throughout the next two centuries and into the twentieth century. Consequently vernacular translation was not an *essential* pre-requisite for the dissemination of ideas, and translation *from* Latin into the vernacular was not necessarily essential even as recently as the 1940s. In the seventeenth-century, Hobbes, Bacon and Herbert of Cherbury all wrote primarily in Latin for both an international readership and for a learned audience at home. The same is true of Gassendi and Grotius. The Latin heritage of early modern philosophy leaves its imprint on the philosophical vocabulary of seventeenth-century philosophy.<sup>11</sup>

### The Vernacular Turn of the Seventeenth Century

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<sup>11</sup> Gregory, "Sul lessico filosofico latino del seicento e del settecento", in his *Origini della terminologia filosofica moderna*, 78–108 (This was first published in *Quaderni di terminologia filosofica e storia delle idee*, 5 (1991), 1–20). Marta Fattori, "La survivance du latin comme langue philosophique jusqu'au 17<sup>e</sup> siècle" in Hamesse, *Aux origines*, 255–85. Cf. also E. J. Ashworth, "Do Words Signify Ideas or Things? The Scholastic Sources of Locke's Theory of Language". *JHP*, 19 (1981), 299–326.

Although Latin remained in use as the professional and international language of philosophy, in the seventeenth century it was becoming the second language, as philosophers adopted the vernacular as their primary language. This vernacular turn in the seventeenth century puts the spotlight on translation in various ways. The most obvious is that it gave a new importance to translation as a means of philosophical communication. The adoption of the vernacular as the language of philosophy, was driven in large part by the emergence of a non-specialist or “lay” audience for philosophy, as social, economic and educational conditions changed — increased literacy among non-professionals, and enhanced economic conditions account for a broadening of the audience for philosophy beyond universities and colleges. Although they were better educated, this new non-specialist philosophical readership was not necessarily Latinate. To cater for this readership, translation *from* Latin *into* the vernacular was essential. Although Hobbes wrote in Latin for an educated international readership, he wrote his most famous book, *Leviathan*, in English, in order to address a more general audience of his fellow-countrymen. He nonetheless arranged for a translation of *Leviathan* into Latin, in order to address an international audience. The obverse is the case with Richard Cumberland, whose *De legibus naturae* was translated into English for home consumption. There were two English translations, one by John Maxwell in 1727, and the other by John Towers in 1750.

### **The Shift from Latin and the Cartesian Revolution**

The vernacular turn in philosophy is often associated with Descartes who chose to write in his native French for both his non-specialist philosophical writings (*Discours de la method* (1637), and *Les Passions de l’Ame* (1649), both of which appeal directly to the philosophical amateur, that is the reader without a formal academic training, who would require only common sense in order to follow his arguments. In actual fact Descartes wrote in Latin for his main work of natural philosophy, *Principia philosophiae* (Paris, 1644) and for his *Meditationes* (Paris, 1641). But both texts were translated into French in his lifetime: a translation of *Principia philosophiae*, commissioned by Descartes from Abbé Picot was published as *Les Principes* in 1647, while the Duc de Luynes’s translation of *Meditations* appeared in 1647.

Descartes was not the first early modern philosopher to use the vernacular for philosophy. His use of the vernacular is anticipated by sixteenth-century philosophers such as Montaigne and Bruno. In England Francis Bacon's *Advancement of Learning* antedates Descartes's *Discours* by 32 years; it was first published in English in 1605, and addressed to the King. This was followed in 1644 by Kenelm Digby's *Two Treatises* which was published in Paris in 1644.<sup>12</sup> Since Digby frequented the circle of Marin Mersenne, it is possible that his decision to write in English was motivated by Descartes's adoption of the vernacular. The first philosophers to write *consistently* in English were the so-called Cambridge Platonists, Henry More (1615–1687) and Ralph Cudworth (1617–1688).<sup>13</sup> By the 1690s English had been established the primary language of British philosophy: Locke, Shaftesbury, and Berkeley all philosophised in English, as did the philosophers of the Scottish Enlightenment. There were, of course, exceptions: Henry More for example published works on ethics and metaphysics in Latin for an academic readership (his *Enchiridion ethicum* and his *Enchiridion metaphysicum*). The vernacular turn also affected classical philosophy, of which English translations begin to appear, some of them translated from translations. Examples are Boileau's *The Life, and Philosophy, of Epictetus*, and La Rochfoucauld's *Maximes* of Epictetus, all published in 1670.

### **Translation: English and Latin**

Perhaps the most obvious consequence of the vernacular turn was that it changed the linguistic boundaries, raising many new ones. Where previously the boundary to be crossed was that between Latin and the vernacular, which demarcated a difference between professional/academic and lay readerships, now there was increasing demand for translation from one vernacular (e.g. English) into another (e.g. French). This was not just for the benefit of the lay public, but it also benefited philosophers. Pierre Bayle, for example did not read English, and Leibniz only imperfectly. Both profited from the French translations published by Jean Le Clerc in his journal, *Bibliothèque choisie*. Vernacular translation becomes essential for both lay and professional readers of philosophy alike. Thus, where originally the vernacular was

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<sup>12</sup> Kenelm Digby, *Two treatises. In the one of which, the Nature of Bodies; in the other, the Nature of Mans Soule* (Paris: Gilles Blaizot, 1644).

<sup>13</sup> See my *British Philosophy in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), chapter 6.



used particularly, for non-specialist audiences, in the seventeenth century it was increasingly used for specialist audiences. By the same token, since more philosophical works were written in the vernacular, translation *from* the vernacular *into* Latin becomes increasingly important for reaching an international audience.

With the increasing use of the vernacular as the language of philosophy, translation *into* English increased in importance — from both foreign vernaculars *and* from Latin. The first work by Descartes to be translated into English was *Discours de la méthode* which was published in 1649 as *A Discourse of a Method for the Well-guiding of Reason, and the Discovery of Truth in the Sciences*, followed by *The Passions of the Soule* in 1650. Descartes's *Méditations* did not appear in English until 1680, when William Molyneux published his translation with the title, *Six Metaphysical Meditations*. Other French philosophical works translated into English include Cureau de la Chambre, *Art de connoistre les homes*, by Hobbes's friend, John Davies of Kidwelly and Pierre Nicole's *Essais de morale* (which was translated as *Moral Essays*, 1677, followed in 1712 by Locke's translation of the first three essays).<sup>14</sup> Pierre Nicole and Antoine Arnauld's *Logique, ou l'art de penser* (the so-called Port Royal logic) was translated into English as *Logic or the Art of Thinking*, in 1685.<sup>15</sup> Malebranche was translated by several different translators: *Recherche de la vérité* (translated as *Malebranch's Search after truth*, 1694), *Traité de la nature et de la grace* (translated as *A Treatise of Nature and Grace by: Richard Sault* in 1695), and *Traité de Morale* (translated as *A Treatise of Morality*, by James Shipton in 1699).

The vernacular turn in philosophy was not uni-directional, as may be illustrated by the number of translations of English philosophical texts into European languages. Francis Bacon's *Essays* were translated into French (by Sir Arthur Gorges and by Jean Baudoin, both in 1619), Italian (possibly by Bacon's friend Tobie Matthew) and German (in 1654). A French translation of his *Advancement of Learning* by A. Maugars was published in 1624 with a French translation of the Latin version in 1632.<sup>16</sup> Locke's *Essay concerning Human Understanding* was

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<sup>14</sup> Full title: *Discourses on the being of a God, and the immortality of the soul; of the weakness of man; and concerning the way of preserving peace with men* (London: J. Downing, 1712). Locke dedicated his translation to the Earl of Shaftesbury.

<sup>15</sup> First published in French in 1662, this was published in England in Latin in 1674.

<sup>16</sup> *Le Progrez et Avancement aux Sciences Divines et Humaines* and *Neuf livres de la Dignité et de l'Accroissement des Sciences*. Baudoin translated several other Bacon texts. See David J. Sturdy, *Science and Social Status: The Members of the Académie des Sciences 1666–1750* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 1995), 23.

translated into French by Pierre Coste in 1700 (Malebranche read Locke in Coste's translation). Pierre Coste also translated *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1695) and *The Reasonableness of Christianity* (1696). A French translation of Locke's *Two Treatises of Government* by David Mazel, was published in Amsterdam in 1691 (reprinted 1700), and a Dutch translation in 1736. A German translation of the second *Treatise* (*Le Gouvernement Civil, oder die Kunst Wohl zu Regieren*) appeared in 1718. There was only one vernacular translation of Hobbes's *Leviathan* (Abraham van Berkel's *Leviathan of van der stoffe*, 1667) perhaps because Hobbes's political philosophy was available in both Latin and vernacular translations: *De cive* was translated into Dutch as *De eerste beginselen van een burger-staat* (1675), and into French as *Elemens philosophiques du citoyen* by Samuel Sorbière in 1649, followed by Du Verdur's French translation of *De cive* parts I and II, in 1660 with the title *Elemens de la politique*. The only other English work Hobbes to be translated was *Of Libertie and Necessity* in a Dutch translation, *Een tractaatje van vrijwilligheyd en noodzakelijckheyd* (1698).<sup>17</sup>

### Translation into Latin:

Another way of dealing with linguistic borders was through translation into a *lingua franca*. Eventually, French would emerge as the language of intellectual exchange in the European Republic of Letters. In consequence, translation into French was increasingly important for the dissemination of British Philosophy in Europe. This may be why Locke chose to publish in French and may have influenced the decision to translate into French a work by his friend Lady Masham: her *A Discourse Concerning the Love of God* was published in French as *Discours sur l'Amour Divin* (1705). Francophone learned journals served as a clearing house for English philosophy: Jean Le Clerc's *Bibliothèque choisie* and *Bibliothèque universelle* and Jacques Basnages' *Nouvelles de la République de letters* centred in the Huguenot *réfuge* in Holland. The first (abridged) version of Locke's *Essay* was published in French in Jean Le Clerc's *Bibliothèque Choisie* as "Extrait d'un livre anglois ... intitulé essai philosophique concernant l'entendement" translated by Le Clerc. French translations of a substantial number of articles from the Royal Society's

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<sup>17</sup> Malcolm, *Aspects of Hobbes*, 464–69. Another French translation *Le corps politique ou les éléments de la loi*, appeared in 1652. There were also French translations of Hobbes's works by du Verdur, but these have not survived.

*Philosophical Transactions* were printed in the *Journal des Sçavans* between 1665 and 1701.<sup>18</sup>

Prior to the emergence of French as the common currency of intellectual exchange, the *lingua franca* was Latin. The continued demand for works in Latin testifies to the resilience of Latin as the language of education in general and philosophy in particular. Of course, translation *into* Latin was nothing new, as we know from the example of Marsilio Ficino's Latin translation of the works of Plato. In the seventeenth century the reasons for translating *into* Latin had less to do with making Greek philosophy available to Latinate philosophers, but was more the direct consequence of the vernacular turn in philosophy. The main purpose of translation into Latin was to make vernacular philosophy available to the international philosophical community. It was common practice for philosophers to oversee the translation of their works into Latin themselves, e.g. Francis Bacon, whose *De augmentis scientiarum* was translated in his life time.<sup>19</sup> Hobbes's *Opera philosophica* was published by Blaeu in Amsterdam. A Latin translation of *Leviathan* was printed in Amsterdam (1668, overseen by Sorbière). Henry More, too translated his collected works into Latin in order to reach a European audience: his *Opera Omnia* appeared in 1679. John Locke normally wrote in English, but he oversaw a Latin translation of his *Essay* by Ezekiel Burridge (published as *De intellectu humano* in 1701). This translation had wide European circulation, with reprints published across Europe in Leipzig, Naples and Krakow in the eighteenth century. Robert Boyle, had his writings translated for international consumption: with over 26 translations to his name, he was probably the most translated natural philosopher. *Philosophical Transactions* of the Royal Society was the most important medium for natural philosophy, but its being in English was a disadvantage for international circulation. To remedy this a Latin translation of the first volumes was commissioned from Christoph Sand in 1671. Many translations were posthumous. There was a Latin translation of Bacon's *Essays* by William Rawley in 1638. Jacob Gruter translated Bacon's *Sylva sylvarum* together with *New Atlantis* in 1626. Isaac Gruter published Bacon's *Scripta in naturali et universali*

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<sup>18</sup> See Anthony Turner, "An Interrupted Story: French Translations from *Philosophical Transactions* in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries", *Notes and Records of the Royal Society*, 62 (2008), 341–354.

<sup>19</sup> This is an expanded version of *The Advancement* and was reprinted in France (1625), Germany (1635) and The Netherlands (1645). It was translated back into English in 1640. See Stephen Gaukroger, *Francis Bacon and the Transformation of Early-Modern Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 132, n.

*philosophia*, in the Netherlands in 1653 (reprinted 1685). Bacon's *Opera omnia* was published in Frankfurt in 1665, with a further edition in 1694. A philosopher whose European reputation suffered because he did *not* publish in Latin was Ralph Cudworth — at least, not in his lifetime. Cudworth's main philosophical treatise, *The True Intellectual System of the Universe* was published in English. No less a philosopher than Leibniz had difficulty reading Cudworth for this reason. Instead he had to rely on the French translations of excerpts from Cudworth's book in Le Clerc's journal, *Bibliothèque choisie*. It was not until the Latin translation of Cudworth's works by Mosheim in 1733 that his philosophy became widely known in Europe.

Just as there were Latin translations of English-language philosophy for foreign consumption, so also Latin versions of French and other texts were printed for home consumption. For example, a Latin version of the Descartes' *Discours* was printed in Cambridge in 1668. The first version of his *Meditations* to be published in England was the *Meditationes de prima philosophia* in 1664. Also Malebranche's *La recherche de la verité* was published in London in 1687 (*De inquirenda veritate libri sex*). As these examples show, there was continued demand for works in Latin, so it would be misleading to suggest that the vernacular turn meant that classical languages were swept aside comprehensively and definitively.

### **The Challenges of Translating: Finding Words**

One of the biggest challenges for translators was the formation of a conceptual vocabulary in languages where none had existed previously. A cognate problem was the need to generate terminology to express new ideas. To a large extent the challenge of forming a vernacular conceptual vocabulary, was mitigated by the fact that translators were working in a cultural climate where the influence of Latin was already apparent, and had already made its mark in the vernacular. So it was natural for them to draw on classical languages for the purpose of coining terms.<sup>20</sup> On the

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<sup>20</sup> As Marta Fattori, points out, Latin was not just a common language, but a source for technical terminology in a variety of vernaculars: “La langue latine ne permet pas seulement la confrontation constant avec les autres langues vernaculaires, ne constitue pas seulement une langue encore à la République de Lettres, mais représente une pierre de touche sur la base de laquelle on cherche à définir les différentes nomenclatures techniques dans les différents domaines de l'*orbis* de la connaissance”: Marta Fattori, “La survivance du latin

other hand, seventeenth-century philosophers who eschewed *scholastic* philosophy and presented themselves as doing something new, deliberately rejected old forms, in favour of “common sense” and plain speech. These new *non-scholastic* vernacular philosophies, presented somewhat different challenges. Since many of them made a virtue of using ordinary language, finding appropriate terms in other vernaculars was not necessarily difficult. But translating *into* Latin might be more challenging.

It is striking that British philosophers were highly conscious of the importance of language in philosophy. Francis Bacon, for example, identifies inappropriate use of language as responsible for false conceptions in philosophy. These are what he calls “idols of the market place”. Bacon himself uses familiar philosophical nomenclature, but in a different sense from received philosophical traditions. And he coins new terms and nomenclature for his new natural philosophy in *Novum organum*. For Locke too concern for language and terminology is at the foundation of his philosophical concerns. In the Preface to *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* he criticises terminological obfuscation in other philosophies, the confusion arising from the terminology in use (the “frivolous use of uncouth, affected, or un-intelligible Terms, introduced into the Sciences”).<sup>21</sup> He himself strove for clarity and deliberately adopted a plain, every-day style suitable for non-experts. Another development which is not un-connected with the demise of Latin and the complexities of producing vernacular translations is the interest in formulating a universal language, to overcome the difficulty of communication in the vernacular environment. This was partly inspired by Europeans’ first encounter with oriental orthographical systems. The best known example is John Wilkins, *Essay towards a Real Character and a Philosophical Language* (1668).<sup>22</sup>

### **Translation and Conceptual Coinage: Ralph Cudworth**

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comme langue philosophique jusqu’au 17e siècle”, in Hamesse (ed.), *Aux origines*, 255–85, p. 255.

<sup>21</sup> Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Nidditch (ed.) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), p.8. On Locke and language, see Hannah Dawson, *Locke, Language and Early-Modern Philosophy*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

<sup>22</sup> James Knowlson, *Universal Language Schemes in England and France, 1600–1800* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975); M. M. Slaughter, *Universal Languages and Scientific Taxonomy in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

An important way in which translation impacts on philosophy is in the philosophical vocabulary adopted by philosophers writing in the vernacular. A particularly striking case where translation plays constructive role in concept-formation in seventeenth-century English philosophy is Ralph Cudworth. A distinctive feature of Cudworth's philosophical vocabulary is that he not only taps into the reservoir of Latin terminology, but also draws on Greek. This is well exemplified in his conception of both consciousness and unconsciousness.<sup>23</sup> The remainder of this essay takes Cudworth as a case study of the transformative role of translated vocabularies on the conceptual vocabulary of early modern philosophy.

Cudworth was one of the so-called Cambridge Platonists, who were the first philosophers to publish *primarily* in English. In so doing, they coined many English philosophical terms, some of which form part of our modern philosophical vocabulary. Like Cicero before them, they had, as G.F. Powell says of Cicero, to “forge a new conceptual ‘toolkit’ ” for vernacular philosophy (i.e. English).<sup>24</sup> Unlike Cicero, the Cambridge Platonists did not have the ambition to emulate or even surpass the Greeks. The same can be said of their view of the moderns. But they did come up with many new coinages, which reflect their engagement with both ancient and modern philosophy. This is particularly striking in the case of Ralph Cudworth, who draws not just on Latin, but on Greek. Just as Cicero did with Latin, Cudworth appropriates Greek words, ideas and concepts to construct an English philosophical vocabulary capable of handling new philosophical concepts. Cudworth's practice of translating terminology to generate new coinages is made abundantly visible in his stylistic habit of replicating terms in appositional phrasing, and his use of multiple synonyms.

Cudworth's recourse to ancient philosophy, his practice of retaining of Greek words, and of coining neologisms may be exemplified in his use of the term “power” and “powers”. In Cudworth power can mean an active principle, a force, ability or capacity. Powers may be intellectual, “noetical” and “cogniscitive” powers; powers of perception, sensation and passion; mechanical and self-moving powers. “Power”

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<sup>23</sup> On Cudworth's philosophy, see J.A. Passmore, *Ralph Cudworth. An Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951) which has not been superseded. For Cudworth's conception of consciousness, see Thiel, *Early Modern Subject*; Martine Pécharman, “Cudworth on Self-Consciousness and the I Myself”, *Vivarium* 52.3–4, (2014), 287–314; Vili Lähteenmäki, “Cudworth on Types of Consciousness”. *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 18.1 (2010), 9–34.

<sup>24</sup> G. F. Powell “Cicero's translations from Greek”, in his *Cicero the Philosopher*.

is the term by which he translates both the Latin *potestas* and *vix* and the Greek *dynamis*. He also imports Greek terminology, such as the term *energy*, taken directly from Greek *energeia*. Transliterated Greek terms are used especially in his theory of the soul, in particular terms to express the key notion of “self-power” — *autokinesie* (self-movement), *autexousion*, *hegemonikon*, *to eph' hêmin*.<sup>25</sup> These imports, and their anglicised versions are not mere humanistic affectation, or simple transplantations from the Greek sources, but they are terms used to express original components of Cudworth’s own philosophy. They are functional terms adopted in order to formulate new ideas and new theories. A case in point is his philosophy of mind.

### **Cudworth on consciousness and unconsciousness**

As already mentioned, Cudworth has been credited with introducing the very term “consciousness” into the English philosophical terminology. In fact, he may also be credited with coining the term “unconscious”. The modern notion of consciousness, as an inner perception of our mental states and activities, is something we owe to the seventeenth century. The Latin term for it, *conscientia*, does not distinguish conscience in a moral sense, from the psychological idea of the mind’s awareness of itself, which, philosophically speaking, is usually associated with Descartes’s conception of the *cogito*, or *res cogitans* as *conscious*.<sup>26</sup> Descartes was interpreted as meaning that thinking and consciousness as co-terminous, that the *res cogitans* is always conscious.

In his main philosophical work, *The True Intellectual System of the Universe* (1678), Cudworth objects to “the Narrow Principles of some late Philosophers”, who hold that that the soul is always conscious — a clear reference to Descartes, but also, perhaps to Arnauld and Nicole’s Port Royal logic.<sup>27</sup> There are strong reasons therefore, for assuming that Cudworth’s terminology derives from the French/Latin

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<sup>25</sup> For a fuller discussion, see my “Salving the phenomena of mind: energy, hegemonikon, and sympathy in Cudworth”, *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, 45.3(2016), 465–86.

<sup>26</sup> Boris Hennig, “Cartesian Conscientia”, *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, 15 (2007), 455–84.

<sup>27</sup> “[O]ur *thought* or *perception* is essentially reflective upon itself: or, as it is said rather better in Latin, *est sui conscia*. For I do not think without knowing that I think. I do not know a square without knowing that I know it”. Arnauld and Nicole, *Logic, or, The Art of Thinking*, translated by Jill Vance Buroker, 71.

conscience/*conscientia*. However, in the context in which Cudworth frames his objection to the Cartesians, it is clear that more is at stake than mere terminology. There is a conceptual development in process. For Cudworth notes that the activity of the soul includes life-processes which cannot be explained either in terms of the body or in terms of cogitation. He therefore wants to make a distinction between self-aware states of the soul when the soul is conscious, i.e. when it is thinking, and states when the soul obviously continues to perform vital functions (e.g. regulating heartbeat) without being conscious of these activities. Cudworth describes this state, as *unconscious* (e.g. when asleep), defining it negatively by reference to being conscious. Taken together, consciousness and unconsciousness are part of a more complex account of the soul and mind than the Cartesian *res cogitans*. One might argue that Cudworth has simply re-interpreted Descartes, adapting and developing his terminology for this purpose. This may, of course, be the case. But there is an alternative source for Cudworth's conception of consciousness: not Descartes, but Plotinus. And this is abundantly evident from the fact that Cudworth refers to the self-awareness of the soul by means of two synonyms: "consense or consciousness". Cudworth's use of the term "consense" is sufficient indication that his source is not Cartesian. In fact as Udo Thiel has pointed out, "consense" is a translation of Plotinus's term "synaesthesia" or "inner sense". To rub the point home Cudworth describes consciousness by means of multiple apposition of terms and phrases, some imported from Greek (*autokinesie* and *synaesthesia*) and some from deriving from Latin (*animadversive*, *attentive*) and some translated (*con-sense*):

there may be a simple *Internal Energy* or Vital *Autokinesie*, ... that is included in the Nature of *synaesthesia*, *Con-sense* and *Consciousness*, which makes a Being to be Present with it self, *Attentive* to its own Actions, or *Animadversive* of them.<sup>28</sup>

A state of unconsciousness is also a state where the soul possesses "*Vital Energy*", but without "*Synaesthesia*" [*consense*], "express *Consciousness*" and "*Self-perception*". In this way Cudworth, turns to both Latin and classical Greek philosophy to supply terms for expressing ideas of consciousness and unconsciousness, which are distinct from Descartes. But this is not a case of simple terminological substitution nor has he merely reproduced Plotinus's notion of

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<sup>28</sup> Cudworth, *True Intellectual System of the Universe* (London, 1678), 159. Greek "synaesthesia" transliterated.



consciousness. Rather he has adapted it in the very process of adopting Plotinus's vocabulary, so as to propose a theory of consciousness by means of transformative translation which involves a re-interpretation and re-application of Plotinus to tackle a problem in the Cartesian conception of mind.

## **Conclusion**

In the vernacular turn of the seventeenth century, translation had an increasingly important role in the dissemination of philosophical ideas. However, the impact of translation was more than a matter of communication and reception. The example of Cudworth illustrates the creative impact of translation on philosophy itself. Considered as a vector of cultural transfer, translation can be shown to contribute to the development of new philosophical ideas. In both processes, it is important not to under-estimate the significance of Latin but also of Greek in the vernacular turn of the seventeenth century.