

# International Session

**International session**  
**“Philosophy and translation”**

Naoko Saito (Kyoto University)

The theme of the international session at the 76th annual meeting of Philosophical Association in Japan is “Philosophy and translation.”

The history of philosophy, East and West, is inseparable from questions of translation. Issues of translation range from its literal, conventional sense of interlinguistic conversion, to a much broader, cross-cultural and intracultural endeavour. Translation can also function between academic disciplines. Across this broad range, the scope of translation opens diverse paths and crosses borders. Translation can be seen as a window through which to reconsider the task of philosophy today.

Different aspects of the juncture between philosophy and translation can be marked by the use of different prepositions: philosophy *of* translation, philosophy *in* translation, philosophy *as* translation. These expressions imply a field of possibilities that extends from consideration of the etymology and translation of pivotal terms, through questions of communication between philosophical traditions grounded in different languages, and to the pragmatics of philosophical exchange in an international research scene dominated by English. Beyond these interlingual matters, there is good reason also to consider translation intralingually. Shifts in meaning between different forms of discourse and different language registers are of fundamental importance to philosophical thought. Such matters are not minor aberrations in an otherwise stable structure of language but indicate something of central importance about the functioning of signs and nature of thought. In fact, the experience of translation opens the space for the exercise of judgement and for possibilities of individual and cultural transformation.

Thus translation can be considered in relation to:

- Historical examination of philosophy and translation
- Linguistic analysis of translation
- Translation in relation to particular philosophical approaches (analytical, continental, pragmatist, etc.)
- Translation as an intralinguistic issue (translation as internal to the nature of language)
- Translation and the substance of comparative philosophy
- Translation as related to cross-cultural communication
- Philosophy, translation and human transformation
- Translation and the crossing of philosophical divides (for example, the continental and the analytical)
- Political implications of philosophy and translation
- Translation, the internationalization of higher education and the role of philosophy

In this international session, three speakers will discuss the topic of philosophy and translation from their particular areas of interest and expertise.

## Translation and Seventeenth-Century Philosophy:

A Historical Perspective

Sarah Hutton (University of York)

In unbroken continuity since ancient times, the language of intellectual activity in Europe was Latin. But this changes in the seventeenth century, with the emergence of the vernacular as the *lingua franca* of intellectual exchange. Although many philosophers continued to write primarily in Latin (e.g. Bacon and Hobbes), others adopted the vernacular (e.g. Locke and Malebranche). This vernacular turn is often credited to Descartes (although he continued to write in Latin, as well as writing in French). These changes reflect a broadening of the audience for philosophy beyond the academies. Where previously translation *into* the vernacular was essential for reaching a lay audience, a consequence, the vernacular turn gave a new importance to translation as a means of philosophical communication within the international philosophical community with translation *into* Latin becomes a necessity for reaching an international audience. The shift to the vernacular also presented its other challenges, in particular the formation of a conceptual vocabulary where none existed previously. It was natural, therefore for philosophers to draw on classical languages for this purpose, with the result that to philosophise in the vernacular could be regarded as a form of translation. This is particularly true of the English philosophers Kenelm Digby and Ralph Cudworth.

My paper will assess the role of translation in philosophical interchange in early modern European philosophy. I shall take a historical perspective, drawing on the notion of 'cultural transfer' which has been developed by historians. After giving an account of some of the most important Latin translations of the period (vernacular and Latin), I shall discuss the dependence of vernacular philosophical terminology on classical languages, in some of the first English philosophers to write in the vernacular.

**SARAH HUTTON** is Honorary Visiting Professor in the Department of Philosophy at the University of York. She studied at New Hall, University of Cambridge and the Warburg Institute, University of London. She has held posts at the University of Hertfordshire, Middlesex University and Aberystwyth University. She has published extensively on early modern century intellectual history, with special interests in the Cambridge Platonists, and women in early modern philosophy and science. Her publications include *Anne Conway, a Woman Philosopher* (CUP, 2004), *Newton and Newtonianism*, edited with James Force (Springer, 2004), and *British Philosophy in the Seventeenth Century* (OUP, 2015). She is director of *International Archives of the History of Ideas*, a member of board of management of *The Journal of the History of Philosophy*, and editorial board member of *The British Journal of the History of Philosophy*.

## Translation, judgement, and the hegemony of English

Paul Standish (University College London)

The philosophical interest of translation is multifaceted. First, it raises questions of a semantic kind as found in the concept-word relation. Second, it offers a way of reflecting on the relation between different conceptual schemes – say, between different cultures. Third, the experience of translation provides occasions for the exercise of judgement in an unparalleled way. A proper examination of these points requires attention to the nature of language and language difference. Languages are not tidily sealed off from one another; nor are they static. Hence, translation occurs both inter- and intra-lingually. Recognition of the latter opens the way to the thought that translation is internal to thought and to self-transformation. While this has its breakthrough moments, it is also something that persists as an undercurrent to human lives and cultures. The particular focus of this paper is on the space of judgement that translation brings. I shall explain the relation between this and the question of pluralism as taken up by Barbara Cassin (2016). Her analysis draws attention to the dominance and unique importance of Greek at the founding of (Western) philosophy. I shall attempt to juxtapose this against the contemporary dominance of one language, English, as philosophy becomes more fully internationalised.

### Reference

Barbara Cassin, *Nostalgia: When Are We Ever at Home?* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016).

**Paul Standish** is Professor of Philosophy of Education and Head of the UCL Centre for Philosophy of Education. His publications cover the range of philosophy of education, and much of his work brings to this a focus on the nature of language and thought. He is particularly interested in productive tensions between different philosophical traditions. Publications over the last ten years include *The Therapy of Education: philosophy, happiness, and personal growth* (2006), co-authored with Paul Smeyers and Richard Smith; *The Philosophy of Nurse Education* (2007), co-edited with John Drummond; *Education and the Kyoto School of Philosophy: Pedagogy for Human Transformation* (2012), co-edited with Naoko Saito; *Cultivating Humanity and Transforming the Knowledge Society* (special issue of *Asia Pacific Education Review*, 2014), co-edited with Duck-Joo Kwak; *Democracy and Education at 100* (Special Issue of *Educational Sciences*, 2016), co-edited with SunInn Yun; *Stanley Cavell and Philosophy as Translation: "The Truth is Translated"* (2017), co-edited with Naoko Saito; *Honyaku no Sanaka ni Aru Shakai-Seigi (Social Justice in Translation)*, 2017), co-edited with Naoko Saito and Yasuo Imai; *Democracy and Education from Dewey to Cavell* (2017), co-authored with Naoko Saito. He was Editor (2001-2011) and is now Associate Editor of the *Journal of Philosophy of Education*. From 2017-2020 he will be Chair of the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain. He is a Panel Member for Philosophy for the Arts and Humanities Research Council in the UK.

## Translation as Synergy of the Mediate and the Immediate

UEHARA Mayuko (Kyoto University)

According to Tanabe Hajime, with the translation of prose, conceptual thinking is rendered on the basis of a “logic of identity”. A representation which is mediated by a word can thereby be transferred from one language to another. By contrast, the translation of poetry is effected through the movement of an “absolute dialectic”, which negates the representation to be converted into symbols. According to this contrast in terms of logic, it appears as though for Tanabe prose is translatable, yet poetry is untranslatable.

In this presentation, I will consider the difference between the translation of philosophical language and of the translation of poetic language, turning to Tanabe’s considerations for assistance in thinking through this difference. I wish to suggest that the linguistic translation of both poetry and prose are realized through a dialectical “moment” whereby the mediate and the immediate are synergized. While taking a critical view on Tanabe’s claim that prose is untranslatable, I will examine this claim in more detail, attempting to give an account of what he meant by it.

**Uehara Mayuko** has been professor of Japanese philosophy at Kyoto University since 2013, prior to which she held the post of Associate Professor at Meisei University in Tokyo for six years. She obtained her PhD from the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales in Paris. She currently serves as editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Japanese Philosophy* (SUNY Press). Her recent writings include “Philosophy in the Shōwa Period as Seen from the Viewpoint of Translation: Ecriture of the Kyoto School” (「翻訳から見る昭和の哲学—京都学派のエクリチュール」, 2013), “A Reinterpretation of Nishida’s Philosophy: Facial Expression Considered from The Viewpoint of Intuition-Action” (「西田哲学の再解釈—行為的直観としての顔の表情」, 2015), “Kuki Shūzō’s *The Structure of “Iki”*” towards Women’s Philosophy” (「女性哲学」へと向かう九鬼周造著『いき』の構造』, 2016), “Nishidian Philosophy and Philosophizing the First Person” (「西田哲学と一人称の哲学化」, 2016).