

## Preface

Philosophy in “the more conventional sense” can also be “education for grownups”. Philosophy only stops being that when it starts thinking of itself as a collection of “specializations” (like medical “specializations”). But philosophy, even in “the more conventional sense” need not and must not think of itself in that way. It is when different insights from different sources are connected with one another that philosophy truly educates us. — Hilary Putnam<sup>1</sup>

The history of philosophy, East and West, is inseparable from questions of translation. Issues of translation range from the conventional sense of interlinguistic conversion, to matters of much broader, cross-cultural, and intracultural significance and endeavour. Across this broad range, the scope of translation opens paths across terrain with diverse boundaries and borders. It becomes a means of traversing the landscapes of philosophy today. That writers and readers are always positioned *somehow* in relation to language, and that this positioning is essential to the very possibilities of thought and community, is echoed in modulations of the *preposition* in our title-phrase, in the philosophy *of* translation, philosophy *in* translation, and philosophy *as* translation. The implications of these modulations echo through the papers that follow.

It is definitional of translation that it involves some kind of relationship to the other: to translate, in its most familiar meaning, is to render an expression in a language that is other than its present form. But the accustomed phrasing of this in terms of “source” and “target” is apt to cover over the subtlety of this relation. For here there is already the intimation of other cultures and ways of life, and hence of other ways of thinking and, perhaps, of philosophizing. Boundaries here are inevitably blurred: what we perceive to be our “identities” is destabilized. To acknowledge this much takes us a long way, but it would be wrong not to recognize also that this blurring is part of the dynamism of language itself, its opening to new meanings: hence, it points to an alterity within culture (blurring what we perceive to

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<sup>1</sup> Hilary Putnam, “The Fact/Value Dichotomy and Its Critics”, in *Stanley Cavell and the Education of Grownups*, Naoko Saito and Paul Standish (eds.) (New York: Fordham University Press), p. 52.

be cultural identity) and within each of us ourselves, extending into thought and reason itself, and characterizing the *pathos* of life. In the light of this, the familiar and understandable tendency to see translation as a task of a primarily technical kind needs to be exposed for its inadequacy. Such an assumption involves a misconception of what happens in translating from one language to another — as though, in principle, this were an isomorphic matter, a matching of compatible systems, when in fact it imposes on the translator the responsibility of a continual exercise of judgement in the face of incommensurability. What is more, that assumption radically misunderstands the extent to which translation is at work in ourselves and, hence, is crucial to any convincing philosophy of mind.

The fact that philosophizing and in fact thinking as a whole are always conditioned in some degree by translation indicates how problematic it is to present what is at stake here as a set of isolated issues: the philosophical questions raised by translation admit of no simple mapping onto the discrete categories of philosophy as commonly practised. As the lines of argument in the papers in this volume show, translation puts on trial the identity of philosophy itself. And it is difficult to get “behind” the problems raised, to view them from a neutral vantage-point, because they are, as a dimension of the languages we use, always already there.

In the light of this, the papers selected here have been arranged in three groups. In the first of these, “Translation: Understanding Others”, three papers provide a more substantial and specific account of the problematics sketched above, emphasizing the plurality already there in language and the importance of not obscuring this. Language is not primarily a codification of thought or a representation of things in the world. Rather it is the very element of our world and our lives together, and the relation to the other is inherent in these. “Philosophy in Translation”, the umbrella under which the papers in Part II are gathered, points to the critical part that translation has played in the development of philosophy’s ways of thought and central concepts, ranging from consciousness, reason, and *pathos*, to truth itself. While these terms can sound somewhat lofty, the point being made extends to concepts current in the development of professional forms of practice, as in the case of “student guidance” and “care”. The focus of Part III, “Translation, East-West”, is on particular examples of the relation between Japanese (and Chinese), on the one hand, and English (and German), on the other, bearing in mind the distorting effects of the global hegemony of English. Thus, the discussion here serves in part as an occasion for reflection on the particular linguistic and conceptual pressures under which any distinctively Japanese philosophy must bear up.

Translation can be seen to function also between academic disciplines. The papers in the collection continually raise questions about how to read the texts of philosophy: translation opens new dimensions in the text and makes new connections. Combining the literal sense of translation with its broader and more fundamental senses (as a matter of human transformation), the papers gradually reveal the disciplinary border of philosophy to be open already to other disciplines in the humanities — in particular, to education, literature, theology, and political studies. The cross-cultural interaction of the voices in this volume will serve, we hope, to open further such interdisciplinary possibilities.

The impetus for the present special issue came in part from a symposium, “Philosophy and Translation”, invited by the Philosophical Association of Japan for its annual meeting in 2018, two papers from which, by Sarah Hutton and Paul Standish, are included here.<sup>2</sup> That endeavour and this collection will have served their purpose if they succeed in raising amongst philosophers awareness of both the unavoidability of translation and the imperative to acknowledge the way it is at work in our philosophizing as in our daily lives. This can be an uncomfortable thought for those whose aspirations for philosophy are for ways of reasoning that are untouched by the contingencies of experience in language. In the end, however, to turn towards the translated conditions of the signs and the meanings we make is to find a path to greater philosophical rigour. It is through the connection of different insights from different sources that, as Hilary Putnam remarks, “philosophy truly educates us”.

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<sup>2</sup> Sarah Hutton, Naoko Saito, Paul Standish and Mayuko Uehara, International Session, “Philosophy and Translation”, at the annual meeting of Japan Philosophical Association (May 21, 2017, East Lecture Building 1, 2F, Room 1201, Hitotsubashi University).