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**Translation as Event.
Performing and
Staging Translations**

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[eds.]

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Addressing one of the more interesting problems of our philosophical present, namely, the philosophical issue of translation in comparison with Hegelian philosophy, is a challenging endeavor explored by this thought-provoking publication: *Hegel and/in/on Translation*, edited by Saša Hrnjez and Elena Nardelli. As a programmatic manifesto, the three perspectives encapsulated in the title—and/in/on—introduce the formidable undertaking shouldered by the editors and contributors: Hegel and translation, Hegel in translation, and Hegel on translation. That is: Hegel within the realm of translation, Hegel translated, and Hegel's perspectives on translation all converge, each perspective raising a huge number of implications for this intellectual enterprise.

The volume consists of three sections: 1. On Translation: Theoretical Perspectives; 2. Effects of Translation; 3. Hegel in Translation. These three directions of investigation, almost akin to three research trajectories, serve to unveil additional

quandaries and new fields of analysis, thereby offering distinct approaches to the topic of translation. Primarily, they seek to underscore the interconnections between Hegel's philosophy and the potential determination of his specific understanding of the *Übersetzungsbegriff* (the concept of translation). Additionally, they delve into the perennial question of what it truly means to translate Hegel and whether such a feat is genuinely feasible. Furthermore (and this is perhaps the most intriguing aspect), they attempt to present and analyse Hegelian thought as a profound and articulated expression of a translational 'dispositif.' Given the wide-ranging and interdisciplinary nature of the topic at hand, it is essential to approach it from multiple and diverse perspectives. With this objective in mind, the volume presents a substantial collection of contributions authored by scholars well-versed in Hegel and classical German philosophy. Additionally, the volume includes contributions from translators and scholars who have extensively researched the intricacies of translation.

From this perspective, the enquiry into the prospect of discovering a theory of translation within Hegel's philosophy also (and above all) entails questioning the very notion of translation itself. Thus, it necessitates discarding predetermined, vague or hasty definitions that have been attributed to translation—definitions that often diminish this concept to imply the mere semantic or linguistic 'transferability' from one language to another. As the editors write in *Is it possible to speak about a Hegelian theory of Translation? On Hegel's Übersetzungsbegriff and some paradigmatic practices of translation*, their impressive essay opening the volume:

Such flexibility can be noted through a frequent figurative usage of the notion of translation in theoretical discourses that aim at designating various processes of transferring, transporting, mediating, and transforming or simply changing passages from something to some other. In these cases, translation lends itself perfectly well as a metaphor for

a special kind of processuality, especially when this processuality also embraces the semiotic or linguistic dimension. (p. V)

At stake, on the one hand, is the very meaning of translation as metaphor, which cannot simply imply or refer to another metaphor without losing its concreteness. On the other, the impossibility of an empty reference to another in place of the same is precisely what the Hegelian dialectic would intend to deny or dismiss (whether it succeeds in its intent is clearly another point of discussion, as some of the contributions in the volume will show).

Hence this is undoubtedly the primary philosophical goal of this dense volume: to critically examine the notion of translation by interrogating Hegel with the aim of redefining the fundamental meaning of the concept of translation and its underlying functioning. The outcomes arising from this endeavor are manifold and, to some extent, even at odds with each other, yet they all converge on a shared element that permeates the pages of the volume. By virtue of its inherent translational nature, every Hegelian enquiry into the status of translation becomes a meta-philosophical reflection, namely an investigation that questions its own possibilities. In a nutshell: within the realms of “and/on/in” translation, philosophical thought discovers its own potentiality to extrofect itself (what I mean by extrofection is the double movement to expression contained into dialectical thought: to show its content and to expose itself to risk of reality). Indeed, is not Hegelian philosophy, at its core, a huge endeavor to extrofect thinking into the tangible realm of reality and *as* reality? However, setting aside rhetorical questions or an over-enthusiastical and uncritical adherence to this translational perspective, a pertinent query arises: what challenges does philosophy encounter in undertaking such a venture? As Hrnjez and Nardelli explicitly affirm, the main challenge arising from their own theoretical proposition pre-

cisely resides in the endeavor “to grasp the very significance of the concept of translation without again falling into the trap of its flexibility” (p. VI).

However, I would like to pose an initial question of my own, one that enables us to delve into the intricate historical, theoretical, hermeneutical, and critical propositions presented within the essays in this volume: Why specifically focus on Hegel? As previously mentioned, the act of investigating translation and investigating Hegel are interconnected acts of thinking, as is evident in many essays included in this volume. However, this does not imply that these two issues are interchangeable. On the contrary, the trap of flexibility lies precisely in attempting to simply *translate* Hegel into the problem of translation, since this would entail substituting or interchanging Hegel with another object of enquiry. Instead, the crux lies in the potential to consider both the concept of translation through the analytical framework provided by Hegelian philosophy and also Hegelian philosophy itself as inherently intertwined with the problem of translation. This raises another question: Why exactly does Hegelian philosophy enable us to engage in a metaphilosophical reflection on the concept of translation? There are multiple ways to approach this question. Despite the diverse perspectives presented in the essays in this volume, it appears that a shared understanding or common ground emerges regarding one crucial aspect, namely the *linguistic* nature of Hegelian philosophy. In this regard, Hrnjez and Nardelli explain that

Hegel’s concepts are linguistically embodied, residing in the living organism of the language, so that rather than being abstract and expressionless, they express too much, putting in relation different and often opposing meanings and semantic allusions. (P. VI)

In my view, the crux of the matter lies in that “too much”: we can assume this supra-significance or over-significance of

philosophical language as soon as we consider the linguistic field beyond its mere reduction to the semantic dimension; according to Hegel, language is first and foremost action, activity, praxis, and not just “meaning”). Consequently, Hrnjez and Nardelli argue that “Hegel’s approach to the language of philosophy is already translational in its essence” (p. VI–VII). This statement encapsulates a broad range of implications, many of which are thoroughly explored by the diverse articles included in the volume. It establishes the foundational framework that underlies the entire publication, in fact. It asserts that the process of reflection, which occupies a central position in the *Doctrine of Essence* (a key focus of many contributions to the volume), cannot be simply equated with or reduced to a movement or a process of *flexibility*. In other words, the concept of translation is more closely aligned with the work of reflection rather than being a mere interchangeability of meanings. Translation should not be regarded simply as a straightforward transfer from one language to another if that means refraining from critically examining the significance of the passage and the underlying factors that enable and shape this passage. Hence, it is crucial to emphasize that translation extends beyond a mere process of “transferring, transposing, mediating, and transforming or simply changing passages from something to some other” (p. III). From these initial insights, it becomes evident that the challenge posed by this volume is to fundamentally rethink the very concept of translation. This philosophical endeavor begins with an exploration of Hegel’s perspective but extends beyond it, encompassing broader philosophical horizons.

Unfortunately, it is not possible to provide an in-depth analysis of all the contributions or delve into the intricacies of the various topics addressed within such a richly articulated volume. I will only provide a concise overview of the volume’s

structure, primarily highlighting the essays found in the first section. In doing so, I aim to highlight the underlying thread that runs through the challenging issue of the flexibility of translation, in line with the editors' caveat regarding the potential pitfalls associated with it.

The volume opens with the essay "The Untranslatable in translation: A Hegelian dialectic" (pp. 1–18) by ANGELICA NUZZO. Drawing upon her extensive and fundamental studies on the topic of translation, she addresses one of the central and contentious themes concerning the issue of translation: the question of the untranslatable. This notion immediately poses challenges in its definition when considered in relation to Hegelian thought. Thinking of the Hegelian dialectic as a "dialectical translation" implies conceptualizing translation as a movement encompassing both "alienation and appropriation" (p. II). Therefore, our primary focus will be on understanding the sense of the negative and the meaning of *negation*. Nuzzo formulates the problem in the following terms:

Given the necessary determinateness of dialectical negation, what is the negative (or the contradictory opposite) that specifically confronts translation, and what is the negative at work within translation? What happens to the negative in the process of translation? (P. 3)

Thus the issue at hand revolves around comprehending the *untranslatable*. Nuzzo eliminates any ambiguity by clarifying (and hence notably departing from the Derridean perspective) that the untranslatable should not be understood "in a substantive or substantial sense, but rather in an active and dynamic sense that encompasses the impossibility of translating, the act of resisting or refusing translation" (p. 4). Additionally, Nuzzo highlights how Derrida conceives of the untranslatable solely as "the untranslatable thing", whereas it is essential to consider "the practice of non-translating, the act or the injunction not-to-translate" (p. 6), if one truly pursues a dialectical approach

to the subject of translation. At this juncture, Nuzzo presents a particularly convincing demonstration of how, in Hegel's philosophy, the untranslatable lies precisely in *Das Logische*, which signifies the monolingualism of the absolute idea. Nuzzo asserts, "The original word is not a determinate utterance about determinate things; it is not an address to anyone" (p. 16). Unlike Derrida, who identifies an unsurpassable contradiction between Logic and world, between the assertions that "we only ever speak one language" and "we never speak only one language" (suggesting that *Das Logische* should maintain its purity separate from any multilingualism), Nuzzo argues that it is precisely here that the truly dialectical character of the Hegelian Logic emerges. The untranslatability of *Das Logische* is an activity: the dialectical activity, that is to say, originally operating within the multilingual horizon, that signifies the possibility of a continuous translation as nature and multiplicity.

"*Das Fremde in der Sprache: Hegel e la sfida dell'estraneo*", by SILVIA PIERONI, undertakes an exploration of Hegel's underlying speculative conception of translation, grounded in the concept of *das Fremde* (the Other). Pieroni argues that this notion of foreignness encompasses both linguistic (intra- and infra-linguistic) elements and the intercultural dimension, thereby shedding light on the intercultural implications of translation within Hegel's meta-philosophical framework. Pieroni's analysis is anchored in Hegel's critique of Humboldt's lectures on the Bhagavad-Gita, the well-known Sanskrit epic poem from ancient India. By meticulously examining the Indological aspect that underlies the Humboldt-Hegel debate (especially in comparison with Goethe's perspective) and examining Hegel's rejection of translation as a mere act of 'translation' in his review of Humboldt, Pieroni fundamentally reassesses the Hegelian stance on Oriental thought. Rather than

understanding translation as a form of appropriation that aims to exhaust and assimilate the foreign element, Pieroni argues that the Hegelian act of translation compels the thought to transcend itself, encouraging it to contemplate the “foreigner” and “the foreign language while also apprehending their diversity” (p. 27). Expanding on this premise, the second part of the essay seeks to demonstrate how the thought recognizes itself precisely within this transformative movement of translation, constantly enhancing its ability to faithfully interpret the “original and constitutive otherness of life” (p. 35). Certainly, at least one question remains open: that is, whether the assumption of this exteriority that Pieroni makes coincide with the image of the other, can be translated completely to the otherness of life; that is, whether there is something of irreducible to the concept, something of ‘untranslatable’. In other words: can *Das Fremde* really be translated—hence conceptualized—without losing its own exteriority? And whether, precisely because of this resistance, the Hegelian concept of translation does not risk falling back into the reductionist outcome that Hegel himself had criticized in Schleiermacher (I am thinking, for example, of Hegel’s violent translation of Judaism in his youthful writings, where he does not seem so concerned with reducing the “oriental principle” embodied in Judaism to the sameness of the concept).

In “L’*Übersetzen* comme articulation interne du système encyclopédique: Hegel et Novalis en perspective” (pp. 37–54), GUILLAUME LEJEUNE offers a contrasting perspective, arguing against categorizing Hegel strictly as a thinker of translation. According to Lejeune, Hegel’s interest in translation theory is more circumstantial, as is exemplified by the aforementioned Humboldt review. On a systematic level, Lejeune asserts that “the technical problem of the plurality of languages and their mutual translation is overshadowed by the issue of

the reflexivity of language” (p. 38–39). He posits that Hegel is primarily concerned with the “intralinguistic reflexivity” (p. 39) that translation invokes. Lejeune’s analysis aims to demonstrate how Hegel’s focus lies in revealing the inherent logical structure within this reflexivity, while rejecting the romantic perspective that reduces translation to a mere “rhetoric of poetic effect” (p. 40). In this regard, Lejeune’s analysis seeks to illustrate the immanent coexistence of the logic of reflection within the act of translation. By tracing the articulation of reflection in the *Doctrine of Essence*, Lejeune elucidates how translation, akin to reflection, becomes “the matrix of all activity” (p. 45). He further explains that translation transcends the discursive boundaries that initiate it and embodies the aspect of “performativity” (p. 45). This distinction clearly distinguishes romantic translation from the performative conception of Hegelian language, as is effectively demonstrated by Lejeune in the second part of his essay. Indeed, this raises a pertinent question about the implications for language and its inherently dynamic nature if a unified logical structure underlies every linguistic form. In other words, how can the Hegelian framework adequately account for the existence of multiple languages if language itself is considered the supreme domain of reason?

“Critique of the ‘pure region’. *Übersetzung* and Representation in Hegel by GIANLUCA GARELLI, examines the profound significance of the transition from the notion of *Vorstellung* (imagination-presentation) to the notion of *Darstellung* (representation) as an act of translation. Garelli draws inspiration from a crucial section of the *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, particularly focusing on paragraph 5 of the preface in the later editions from 1827 and 1830, where the concept of *Übersetzung* is introduced. In this passage, it is asserted that “the real import of our consciousness is retained, and even for the first time put in its proper light, when translated into the form

of thought and the notion of reason”. Through an intricate and captivating exploration of the complex relationship between representation and concept in Hegel’s lectures on aesthetics, Garelli sheds light on how the transition from representation to concept (and the equally significant movement in the opposite direction) fundamentally takes on a metaphorical nature. Garelli explains that translation is essentially a “self-referential” metaphor (p. 74), serving as the sole means for the multifarious forms that permeate the world to assume a philosophical form without losing their essence as mere images of another realm. The conclusion of the essay raises the question of what can be ascertained regarding the status of this metaphor and whether it poses a risk of translation succumbing to the pitfalls of flexibility. Indeed, when the concept itself becomes a metaphor for something else, it raises the question of how this metaphorical character can be ‘conceptualized’ without resorting to yet another metaphor.

“Translation as Form. Hegel, Benjamin and the Romantic Workshop” by MICHELE CAPASSO, offers a meticulous and interesting analysis of the theme of translation within the context of Hegel and Benjamin, situating it within Romantic debate. According to Capasso, Hegel adamantly rejects the Romantic concept of translation as form, while Benjamin, in contrast, draws inspiration from this very notion of criticism as translation. That means according to Benjamin, a translation is already a critical activity that involves the interpretation of a work. Capasso emphasizes that criticism, as discussed by Benjamin (in particular in his essay, *On Language as Such and on the Language of Man*) and referencing Schlegel, generates an image of the work—a revitalizing and transformative image that confers upon it a renewed form (p. 79). Capasso illustrates how Benjamin perceives this type of criticism as a particular form of translation, wherein translation serves to bring forth the vi-

tality of the works (a key concept of the essay the *Task of the Translator* which Capasso deeply analyses). Having established this premise, Capasso proceeds to demonstrate how the divergent understandings of translation between Hegel and Benjamin stem from their fundamentally different conceptions of language. Capasso states: “where the philosopher [Hegel] recognized in language a logical instinct [...], Benjamin refers to the symbolic character of the word, to those immaterial similarities that have been transferred into writing» (p. 94). The essay concludes with an intriguing reflection that, similar to Garrelli’s contribution, scrutinizes the status of Hegelian logical language. Capasso suggests that even “the word that governs the entire Hegelian logic, the *Aufhebung*, is itself a translation” (p. 94), thereby raising questions about the nature of Hegelian philosophical language and its ‘metaphorical’ connotation.

“The Activity of Translating in Hegelian Psychology: Transformation and Liberation of the Finite Subject” by ALESSANDRO ESPOSITO, focuses on Hegelian psychology and highlights the significance of the notion of ‘translation’ in understanding the processes of liberation of the finite subject. The essay provides an in-depth analysis, drawing upon both the *Encyclopaedia* and the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, thereby incorporating a notable level of argumentative complexity. Esposito adeptly builds upon Nuzzo’s insights, employing a skillful hermeneutic approach to demonstrate that translation is not merely a formal or abstract act, but a transformative process that fundamentally alters its own praxis. In this regard, translation prompts a profound reevaluation of the very concept of ‘doing’ or, more precisely, the Hegelian understanding of ‘acting’ (*Handeln*). Expanding on this interpretive trajectory, Esposito goes so far as to emphasize that “the activity of translating thus realizes, through the dialectical movement between knowledge and reason, the very freedom of the subjective spirit” (p. 111). This

process, as Esposito further highlights, enables a radical re-assessment of both human action and thought.

“Pure Translation in Hegel’s Phenomenology” by MICHAEL MARDER raises questions regarding the somewhat ambiguous concept of purity in translation, as expounded by Hegel in a passage of the *Phenomenology*. Marder explores the process of translation as a movement that uncovers the profound, the hidden, and the as-yet-unseen, a movement that lies at the core of Hegelian dialectics. However, Marder demonstrates how this process of actualizing what is brought into the light ultimately undermines its own objective each time. Through a compelling interpretation of the Hegelian dynamics of concealment and revelation, particularly evident in the transition to reality, Marder reveals how the opposition generated by any dialectical mediation is always and exclusively a “semblance of opposition” (p. 122). Marder argues that this semblance of opposition poses a serious flaw within the dialectical process. Consequently, the purity of the concept of translation is called into question. In fact, he asserts:

Whereas every translation betrays the translated in translating, pure translation is a perversion (*Umkehrung* or *Verkehrung*) of translatability lacking the opposing pole of a straightforward and faithful rendering, which is this same betrayal or perversion simply unaware of itself as such. (P. 123).

Consequently, “the work unworks (delaborates) itself in the working and the working dissolves in the work” (p. 123). Marder emphasizes that this outcome does not signify the failure of the Hegelian concept of pure translation; rather, it exemplifies the polymorphic nature of translation, wherein its most genuine purity is found in contamination and deformation.

“La filosofia come traduzione in Hegel” by FEDERICO ORSINI inspects the speculative significance of translation in Hegel, approaching the question from both a metaphilosophi-

cal perspective and offering an interpretation of the *Science of Logic* as “a translation understood as a conceptual reconstruction of the history of metaphysics” (p. 141). This proposition presents a compelling argument for how the metaphilosophical nature of translation allows Hegel to transcend the trap of flexibility. According to Orsini, translation possesses an essentially generative quality: by “not assuming the preexistence of its object” (p. 141), it creates it. Consequently, the history of metaphysics is conceptually translated and reconfigured within a new logical framework, namely the Hegelian concept. However, Orsini also highlights that this act of translation represents the very vitality of the concept rather than its final closure or attainment, thereby critiquing interpretations that perceive Hegel’s logic as a closed or achieved system. This aspect continues to be a subject of debate. While it is undoubtedly persuasive to reject any ‘conclusive’ interpretation of Hegelian philosophy, it remains problematic to conceive that, in Hegel’s view, his own translation of the history of metaphysics was merely one among many possible translations rather than the unique and necessary one.

The second part of the volume is dedicated to exploring the effects of translation. The first contribution, “The Reception and Translation of Hegel in Japan”, by AYUMI TAKESHIMA, focuses on Hegel’s presence in the Japanese philosophical debate, highlighting the inseparable connection between the history of Hegel’s reception in Japan and the translation of his works. MARIANA TEIXEIRA, on the other hand, in “Kojève’s «Dialectique du maître et de l’esclave». Notes on the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of a Traitorous Translation”, investigates the interpretation of the master-slave dialectic, pointing out how Kojève’s complete departure from fidelity to the Hegelian text resulted in a profound misunderstandings of Hegel’s philosophy in France. While Kojève openly acknowledged his infideli-

ty to the Hegelian text, presenting his reading as an “ideological gesture” without claiming fidelity to the original, Teixeira’s contribution definitively sheds light on the history of this significant philosophical misunderstanding. “A quoi ressemblerait une philosophie hégélienne de la traduction? Réflexions à partir des traductions françaises de la *Phénoménologie de l’esprit*” by EMMANUEL RENAULT, in turn, focuses on French translations of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, providing both philological and speculative comparisons. A similar examination, but within the realm of Aesthetics, is conducted in “Translating Hegel’s *Aesthetics* in France and Italy: A Comparative Approach” by FRANCESCA IANNELLI and ALAIN PATRICK OLIVIER, who offer a comprehensive and detailed overview of translations of the *Aesthetics* in France and Italy. On the other hand, “By-Play in Hegel’s Writings” by JAKUB MÁCHA explores a curious and intriguing translation connection between ‘Beispiel’ and ‘By-play’, through which Mácha presents an interesting critique of Derrida’s own critique of the Hegelian dialectic. This analysis provides another opportunity to reflect on how the performative and generative nature of translation often becomes the arena in which various philosophical positions are debated and played out. “Some Dimensions of Translating or Writing about Hegel in Urdu” by ASHFAQ SALEEM MIRZA, offers an original perspective (especially for those unfamiliar with the subject) on the translation, reception, and philosophical debate surrounding Hegel in Pakistan. The debate in Pakistan is relatively recent, and therefore particularly compelling (the first translation of Hegel into Urdu is from 2019), allowing Mirza to contemplate the very experience of constructing the philosophical canon through the translation issue.

The third part of the volume, characterized by the almost autobiographic experience of its authors gathers contributions from several translators and interpreters of Hegel, including

“In conversation with Hegel: A Translator’s Story” by GEORGE DI GIOVANNI, “Hacerse lenguas de ‘Hegel’” by FÉLIX DUQUE, “Hegel en Grec” by GEORGES FARAKLAS, “Come si può tradurre la *Scienza della logica*?” by PAOLO GIUSPOLI, “Translating Hegel into Slovenian” by ZDRAVKO KOBE, and “Translating Hegel’s *Logic*. Absolute Negativity and the Crisis of Philosophy as an Institution” by MARCIN PANKOW. They reflect on the significance of their work in translating Hegel into their respective native languages, considering both methodological and philosophical-cultural aspects. Their reflections once again pose the timeless (and perhaps irresolvable) question of what the translator’s task should entail.

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