

Handout

How to Wrestle With the Translation of Wittgenstein's Writings

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Twists and turns of translation

Translation has the goal to recreate the perfect one-way replacement of textual material of the source text in one language into equivalent textual material in another language. The recreation in a different language is made by a human agent working in isolation to rebuild (re-adapt, re-imagine, refashion, reconstruct, or rebuild) the thematic, spatio-temporal, and conceptual source text into the different language of the target text.

Translating *Philosophical Investigations (PI)*

Angenommen, es hätte Jeder eine Schachtel, darin wäre etwas, was wir 'Käfer' nennen. Niemand kann je in die Schachtel des Andern schauen; und Jeder sagt, er wisse nur vom Anblick seines Käfers, was ein Käfer ist. — Da könnte es ja sein, dass Jeder ein anderes Ding in seiner Schachtel hätte. Ja, man könnte sich vorstellen, dass sich ein solches Ding fortwährend veränderte. — Aber wenn nun das Wort 'Käfer' dieser Leute doch einen Gebrauch hätte? — So wäre er nicht der Bezeichnung eines Dings. Das Ding in der Schachtel gehört überhaupt nicht zum Sprachspiel; auch nicht einmal als ein Etwas: denn die Schachtel könnte auch leer sein. — Nein, durch dieses Ding in der Schachtel kann 'gekürzt werden'; es hebt sich weg, was immer es ist. (PI: 293, 1953, MS 124: 256-257, 1944).

Suppose everyone had a box with something in it: we call it a 'beetle'. No one can ever look into anyone's else's box, and everyone says he knows what a beetle is just from looking at *his* beetle. — Here it would be quite possible for everyone to have something different in his box. One might even imagine such a thing constantly changing. — But suppose the word 'beetle' had a use in these people's language? — If so it would not be used as the name of a thing. The thing in the box has no place in the language-game at all; not even as a

something: for the box might even be empty. — No, one can ‘divide through’ by the thing in the box; it cancels out, whatever it is. (PI: 293, 1953, **trans. Elizabeth Anscombe**)

Suppose that everyone had a box with something in it which we will call a ‘beetle’. No one can ever look into anyone’s else’s box, and everyone says he knows what a beetle is only by looking at *his* beetle. — It would then be quite possible for everyone to have something different in his box. One might even imagine such a thing constantly changing. — Here it would be quite possible for everyone to have something different in his box. One might even imagine such a thing constantly changing — But what if these people’s word ‘beetle’ had a use nonetheless? — If so, it would not be as the name of a thing. The thing in the box doesn’t belong to the language-game at all; not even as a *something*: for the box might even be empty. — No, one can ‘divide through’ by the thing in the box; it cancels out, whatever it is. (PI: 293, 2009, **trans. P.M.S. Hacker and Joachim Schulte**)

Let’s assume that everyone had a box with something in it which we will call a ‘beetle’. No one can ever look into anyone’s else’s box, and everyone says he knows what a beetle is just by looking at *his* beetle. — It would then be quite possible for everyone to have something different in his box. One might even imagine such a thing constantly changing. — But what if the word ‘beetle’ used by those people had a use nonetheless? — If so, it would not be as the name of a thing. The thing in the box doesn’t belong to the language-game at all; not even as a *something*: for the box might even be empty. — No, this thing in the box can be annulled; it cancels itself out, whatever it is. (PI: 293, **my trans.**)

Translating and Self-translating *Culture and Value* (CV)

Und was? < *What* exactly? (CV 1980: 51) < Well, *what?* (CV 1998: 59)

Nicht das! < No, I *won’t* tolerate that! (CV 1980: 60) < Not *that!* (CV 1998: 69)

Stimmt das aber? < Is that true though? (CV 1980: 73) < But is that true? (CV 1998: 83)

Wenn man in der Logik eine Trick anwendet, wen kan man tricken, ausser sich selbst? < If you use a trick in logic, whom can you be tricking other than

yourself? (CV 1980: 24) < If you use a trick in logic, whom can you be tricking but yourself? (CV 1998: 28)

Bei Mendelssohn, z.B., nicht < Not with Mendelsson, for example (CV 1980: 37)
 < Not, e.g., in Mendelssohn (CV 1998: 43)
Nicht ist so schwer, als sich nicht betrügen < Nothing is so difficult as not
 deceiving oneself (CV 1980: 34) < Nothing is so difficult as not deceiving
 yourself" (CV 1998: 39)
man < a man (CV 1980: 50) < one (CV 1980: 9 < 1998: 12) < someone (CV 1998:
 57, 69) < we < you < he < one " (see CV 1980: 5, 58, 84 < CV 1998: 7, 66, 95).<
 people (CV 1980: 44, 60 < 1998: 95)
Es ist nicht Unerhörtes darin, daß (...) < There is nothing outrageous in saying
 that (...) (CV 1980: 84) < It is not unheard that (...) (CV 1998: 95)
rätselhaften Schwierigkeiten < puzzling difficulties (CV 1980: 15) < cryptic
 difficulties (CV 1998: 22)
Welche seltsame Sachlage < What a strange situation" (CV 1980: 13) < What a
 singular situation (CV 1998: 22)
nur dann < well, then (CV 1980: 65) < well, in that case (CV 1998: 75)
vielmehr < on the contrary" (CV 1980: 24) < rather" (CV 1998: 27)
Er muss daher (...) < Hence he has (...) (CV 1980: 26) < For this reason he has (...)
 (CV 1998: 42)
Anständigerweise < The honourable thing to do (CV 1980: 8) < The decent thing
 to do (CV 1998: 10)
Wolken kann man nicht bauen < You can't build clouds (CV 1980: 41) < You
 can't construct clouds (CV 1998: 48)
nun er dürr < now it is withered (CV 1980: 79) < now it is shrivelled (CV 1998:
 90)
ewigen Qual < everlasting torment" (CV 1980: 81) < eternal torment (CV 1998:
 92)

Glossary

Akt < act, *Tätigkeit* < activity, *Handlungen* < actions, *Handlungsweise* < ways of
 acting

Verhalten < behavior, *Verhaltensweise* < ways of behavior

Vorstellung < *Darstellung* (perception) < imagination