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**TRANSLATION AS A MEANS  
 OF CONSTRUCTING CULTURES:  
 PHILOSOPHICAL FOREGROUNDING**

**O.V. Rebrii (Kharkiv, Ukraine)**

**O.V. Rebrii. Translation as a means of constructing cultures: philosophical foregrounding.** The aim of the article is to portray translation as a means of constructing cultures in terms of philosophy. Proceeding from the idea that cultural enrichment occurs due to the translation of not only literary works, but also ideas, traditions, way of living, etc., the hypothesis was put forward that philosophical description and analysis of translation should be carried out on the basis of two interwoven phenomena – culture and creativeness. Methodology of the article is determined by general humanitarian principles of interdisciplinarity (use of methods and theories of such correlated disciplines as cultural studies, translation studies, philosophy), anthropocentrism (emphasis on the agent of action as a focal point of translation process), and poliparadigmatism (combination of provisions of classical structural and modern cognitive paradigms resulting in the complex character of the research). Scientific novelty of the research is determined by obtaining some new information concerning the role of translation as a means of (self)cognition / (self)reflection; individual and collective development; and shaping cultural continuum. Innovative approach to translation allows to come to a more profound philosophical understanding of this phenomenon going beyond its linguistic and/or communicative essence and to appreciate its significance for creative self-improvement of all the involved individuals (author, translator, and recipient) as well as for sustained cultural growth all over the world. Conclusions. Conducted research revealed global creative function of translation that helps establish and develop cultures on a universal scale since the majority of national cultures were constructed in the process and under the influence of translation. In the context of Ukrainian colonial and post-colonial history, the article highlighted the role of translation as a cultural catalyst, transmitter of ideas, and defender of spiritual values.

**Key words:** cognition, creativeness, culture, development, nation, philosophy, reflection, translation.

**О.В. Ребрій. Переклад як засіб культуротворення: філософське обґрунтування.** Мета статті полягає у тому, аби представити переклад як засіб культуротворення у термінах філософії. Виходячи з тези, що культурне збагачення здійснюється за рахунок перекладу не тільки художньої літератури, а й ідей, традицій, способу життя тощо, було висунуто гіпотезу про те, що філософський опис та аналіз перекладу має здійснюватися на основі двох переплетених феноменів – культури та креативності. Методологія статті визначається загальними гуманітарними принципами міждисциплінарності (використання методів й теорій таких суміжних дисциплін, як культурологія, перекладознавство, філософія), антропоцентризму (наголос на агенті дії як фокальній точці перекладацького процесу) та поліпарадигматизму (поєднання положень класичної структурної та модерної когнітивної парадигм, що зумовлює комплексний характер дослідження). Наукова новизна дослідження визначається отриманням нової інформації щодо ролі перекладу як засобу (само)пізнання, (само)рефлексії, індивідуального й колективного розвитку та формування культурного континууму. Інноваційний підхід до перекладу дозволяє здійснити глибше філософське осмислення цього феномену, що виходить за межі його лінгвістичної та/або комунікативної сутності, та оцінити його значущість для творчого самовдосконалення усіх залучених особистостей (автора, перекладача, реципієнта) так само як і для усталеного культурного розвитку у світі. Висновки. Проведене дослідження висвітлює глобальну креативну функцію перекладу, який допомагає засновувати та розвивати культури у світовому масштабі, адже більшість національних культур сформовано у перебігу та під впливом перекладу. У контексті

української колоніальної та постколоніальної історичної ситуації стаття підкреслює роль перекладу як культурного каталізатора, провідника ідей та хронителя духовних цінностей.

**Ключові слова:** культура, нація, переклад, пізнання, рефлексія, розвиток, творчість, філософія.

**А.В. Ребрий. Перевод как средство культурообразования: философское обоснование.** Цель статьи заключается в том, чтобы представить перевод как средство культурообразования в понятиях философии. Исходя из того, что культурное обогащение осуществляется за счет перевода не только художественной литературы, но и идей, традиций, способа жизни и пр., была выдвинута гипотеза о том, что философское описание и анализ перевода следует осуществлять на основе двух переплетенных феноменов – культуры и креативности. Методология статьи определяется общими гуманитарными принципами междисциплинарности (использование методов и теорий таких смежных дисциплин, как культурология, переводоведение, философия), антропоцентризма (выделение роли агента деятельности как фокальной точки переводческого процесса) и полипарадигматизма (объединение положений классической структурной и современной когнитивной парадигм, которое определяет комплексный характер исследования). Научная новизна исследования заключается в получении новой информации о роли перевода как средства (само)познания, (само)рефлексии, индивидуального и коллективного развития и формирования культурного континуума. Инновационный подход к переводу позволяет осуществить глубинное философское осмысление этого феномена, которое выходит за рамки его лингвистической и/или коммуникативной сущности, а также оценить его значимость для творческого самоусовершенствования всех задействованных личностей (автора, переводчика, реципиента) и устойчивого культурного развития во всем мире. Выводы. Проведенное исследование раскрывает глобальную креативную функцию перевода, который помогает основывать и развивать культуры во всемирном масштабе, поскольку большинство национальных культур сформировались в процессе и под влиянием перевода. В контексте украинской колоніальної та постколоніальної історичної ситуації стаття підкреслює роль перекладу як культурного каталізатора, провідника ідей та хронителя духовних цінностей.

**Ключевые слова:** культура, нация, перевод, познание, развитие, рефлексия, творчество, философия.

## 1. Introduction

So far, philosophical interpretation of the phenomenon of translation has remained rather limited, confining itself to some aspects of philosophical hermeneutics, theory of knowledge / reflection (epistemology), or philosophy of communication, all of which deal with material primarily derived from psychology, psycholinguistics, semiotics, cultural studies and only then from translation studies. At the same time, philosophy can develop its own theory of translation, not only relatively independent of the abovementioned approaches but also capable of providing additional insight for their further development. Such a theory aims at a more profound philosophical understanding of translation going beyond its linguistic and/or communicative essence, which determines the **relevance** of this research.

## 2. General overview of the problem

How relevant is the introduction of the notion of translation into the paradigm of modern philosophy? The advantages of this are evident as the look at translation as one of the premises of thinking, as a universal mediator in human life and culture allows to see new facets in philosophy as a form of cognition and knowledge embodiment. Thus, the problem of translation takes a new philosophical turn, though philosophers were quite reluctant to admit that philosophy is literally unthinkable without the idea of translation or rather translatability which "forms an elementary ingredient of cognition act" and that "the ontology of translation forms the first and utmost condition of transferring non-verbal content of the mind into articulated, grammatical, and discursive forms" [Fokin 2011: 164].

Meanwhile, this conclusion as to translation's philosophical load is not something principally new for the scholars in the field of translation studies who are well aware of R. Jakobson's typology

of translations according to which hand in hand with interlinguistic (proper) translation there exist intralinguistic (rewording) and intersemiotic (transmutation) ones [Jakobson 1959: 233]. Global ontological status of translation is getting even more evident if we add to this typology "the transference of the unconscious... into critical or transformed forms of consciousness" [Fokin 2011: 164]. N. Galeeva adds that "the translation of one culture into another is also an important form of translation that is not always perceived and described" as it "doesn't fit into linguistic theory" [Galeeva 2006: 25].

Taking into account the potential diversity of translation's philosophical and cultural implications, we put forward the **hypothesis** that describing and analyzing translation in terms of philosophy should be done proceeding from two interwoven phenomena – culture and creativeness simply because, as N. Avtonomova points out, "all European philosophies... appeared in the process of translating from one language into another, from one culture into another and creative activity connected with it" [Avtonomova 2008: 7]. Obviously, "to appear in the process of translating" does not mean "to appear *only* from borrowed words and concepts", but "in order for a philosophy to appear, in addition to certain social circumstances such elements as internal impulse, inclination, mind orientation, and intensive work of transforming the foreign into the native are needed" [ibid.]. Thus, the aim of this article is to portray translation as a creative (inter)cultural phenomenon.

Philosophical approach to creativeness, firstly, gives impetus to its further elaboration within other disciplines and sciences; secondly, helps determine general scientific outlines and priorities of its investigation; and thirdly, has a considerable scientific potential per se. Symbolically, in the context of H. Skovoroda's philosophical doctrine, translation is described as "a congenial labour", that is as a joint creativeness of the representatives of different cultures united by common aesthetic values [Bevz 2011].

Today, the category of creativeness gains a key status not only in comprehending the dynamics of social-historical processes, and prospects of individual growth, but also in "grasping the organization of the universe, the unbreakable bond of its creative potential with innovative activities of human beings" [Yakovlev 2003: 142]. The main philosophical issue in studying creativeness is exposing its ontological status, which immediately brings to mind the statement about translation lying at the core of philosophy evolution itself. There's no doubt that translation is in the first place a linguistic phenomenon, but to lock it in the realm of semasiology stripping of other investigative alternatives means to simplify and impoverish it, to rob of that creative potential due to which modern cultural and humanitarian paradigms are being constantly shaped and reshaped.

Thus, translation appears before us not only as a mediator in interlinguistic exchange of information, but also as a precondition of any social and humanitarian knowledge. Typically, specialists in the field of translation studies emphasize translation's creative nature in connection with the development of national languages and literatures, expansion of the range of genres and stylistic devices, but philosophical accent on translation is quite different; it is aimed at exposing triple role of this phenomenon – as a means of (self)cognition / (self)reflection, as a means of individual and collective development, and as a means of shaping cultural continuum. Highlighting these three roles sets the **tasks** of our research.

### **2.1. Translation as a creative instrument of (self)cognition / (self)reflection**

Today, translation is generally recognized as "an anthropological constant of human existence" as well as "an influential factor of cognition" [Ryabova]. This acclaim was won when translation transformed from a specialized technical area ("craftsmanship") into the sphere of "roaring passions" and "clashes" of scholars who tried to solve such practically unsolvable dilemmas as translatability / nontranslatability, foreignization / domestication, preciseness / impreciseness, etc. Cognition through translation is of creative nature since it proceeds from the human ability "to form the torrents of innovations that provide grounds for qualitative breakthroughs in culture and

guarantee the evolution of both a man and a society" [ibid.]. And yet, in a philosophical sense the combination of "cognition" and "translation" is somewhat unusual. Cognition is most often studied as a mental activity or as a social institution while translation is typically perceived as a linguistic and/or cultural phenomenon. Establishing ties between cognition and translation (cognition as translation and translation as cognition) allows to focus the attention on different important issues of humanitarian knowledge and to turn translation studies into a truly interdisciplinary field.

Cognitive function of translation is not limited by its role of an intercultural mediator. The role of an intellectual stimulator, defined by Yu. Sorokin as "translation from essence into essence" [Sorokin 2005: 46], is of no lesser importance. Translation inevitably involves intuition, art, individuality. But all these important aspects are subordinate to cognition; thus, translation should be treated as a form of cognition which transforms non-verbal experience into verbal forms and launches reflective mechanism of exploring human mind and communication. By following this path, we switch from perceiving translation as a universal instrument of cognition to perceiving translation as a means of cognition by the subject of thought of himself/herself, i.e. to perceiving translation as (self)reflection.

In modern translation studies, reflection is considered a powerful methodological tool which helps in the research of translation process by introducing the figure of the translator as an agent of action who carefully monitors gradual unfolding of one thought after another and fixates the logic of his/her decisions. In this sense, reflection can be defined as a search for sense construed on the appeal of the translator's consciousness to that of the author. Meanwhile, philosophical notion of translation as a reflection is principally different proceeding from the idea of transferring external experience into internal one and vice versa. In a philosophical sense, reflection appears an obligatory way of human existence which philosophical comprehension of life is connected with.

In P. Ricoeur's philosophical concept, the notion of reflection is connected with hermeneutics – the teaching about the art of interpretation. The essence of translation is described by the author as interpretation, as the best way to "explain one thing through another" [Riker 2002: 45]. Reflection, in its turn, is the way to comprehend translation, i.e. to interpret the interpreted. Reflection is "a bridge between understanding signs and human self-understanding", and "only through self-understanding we get a chance to comprehend the existence itself". Such is the way by which reflection "re-integrates semantics into ontology" [ibid: 48]. Any translation is primarily interpretation, and any interpretation "aims at overcoming the distance between the previous cultural period, which the text belongs to, and the interpreter. By doing that, by becoming the text's contemporary, the interpreter can appropriate its meaning, make it his own and consequently expand his own self-understanding through understanding another" [ibid.]. That is how translation becomes hermeneutics and hermeneutics is understanding of oneself, i.e. reflection. Thus, in their mutual relations translation, cognition (interpretation), and reflection present a particular case of Ricoeur's hermeneutic circle.

## **2.2. Translation as a source of individual and collective development**

It is no secret that translation is a form of an individual's self-development, because while interpreting from one language into another in more and more complex social circumstances a person evolves intellectually. O. Polishchuk points at the dual role of creativeness in the process of cognition which is equally characteristic of translation. She describes creativeness as a special form of human activity which results in the emergence of new material and spiritual values. It has both social-cultural and personal meaning, since it serves as a way of an individual's self-realization due to which "new horizons of spiritual life are opened and comprehended" [Polishchuk 2007: 153]. Translation is not just a substitution of words from one language by words from another language. It is a powerful incentive to intellectual growth. By mastering a new language, the translator simultaneously masters its culture and this bilateral process leads, firstly, to individual changes; and secondly, through numerous individual changes to mass social ones. Consequently, cultural

potential of an individual is increasing which in its turn stimulates cultural evolution of each society and humankind in general.

Throughout their history, people have been elaborating and complicating their world which resulted in human activity gaining more potential as well as in increasing its ability to expand both theoretically and practically and to deepen penetration into reality that yet remained unassimilated and unknown. One of the forms of human reaction towards complicated social practices is intensification of communication under which we understand "ever increasing, both in scale and speed, changes in the character and contents of communication among the representatives of different languages and cultures" [Ryabova 2008: 167]. In the context of global social changes, people more and more often get in contact with representatives of other cultures. In connection with this, translation acquires a new role – it acts as a means of solving the problem of *otherlanguageness*.

Otherlanguageness is a social-cultural and social-philosophical phenomenon that appears "as a result of intensification of a dialogical activity on the border between languages" [Akhiezer and Ryabova 2005: 142] and serves as a powerful source of social diversity, including the diversity of a person's creative development. It's incorrect to reduce the concept of otherlanguageness to borrowing elements from one language to another. It should also be considered in relation to the evolution and elaboration of every language in the process of mutual penetration. Hence, the necessity of theoretical foregrounding of the category of "translation-interpretation" as "a flow of new meanings obtained through interpretation" [ibid.]. The category of translation-interpretation makes the concept of otherlanguageness more profound since it takes the form of an intellectual evolution of an individual who's searching for principally new ways to cope with the problem of intercultural diversity. An individual's increasing cultural potential gives an impetus to further implementation of his/her creative potential, formation of new relations both inside a particular culture and among the representatives of different cultures. Otherlanguageness is of a dual axiological nature. Its negative aspect is revealed through juxtaposition / opposition of different groups of people based on a linguistic criterion due to which conflicts caused by misunderstanding, communicative failures, or inability to sustain a dialogue may emerge. Its positive aspect is revealed through opening an access to cultural treasures of other countries and nations, as well as through obtaining a possibility for building up an individual's creative qualities. Positive potential of otherlanguageness is realized in people's creative evolution stemming from "stimulating the growth of their abilities to solve more and more complex tasks" [Ryabova 2008: 170]. It becomes possible "as a result of people's orientation towards positive implications of increasing diversity" [ibid.].

The meaning of translation as a means of self-improvement can hardly be overestimated. Starting from its positive impact on the development of memory, intellect, imagination, articulation, rhetoric, communicative skills, etc., and finishing with the perspective of getting beyond the magic circle of the mother-tongue, translation gives people an opportunity to evolve creatively and to reach new professional and individual achievements. That's how a dialectical dependence between the translator's level of professionalism (competence) and his ability to work with the texts of the highest complexity is established.

Inquiring into the in-depth mechanisms of translation, P. Ricoeur asks a question: "What is the translator's motivation?" And gives the answer: "Desiring translation". Pure wish as an aesthetic and psychological category has quite materialistic cultural consequences, because the translator, in addition to aesthetic satisfaction, self-improving, and self-educating, "can also 'open' his/her native language and its resources anew" [Riker 2002: 298]. In this respect, Ukrainian classic M. Rylsky has a wonderful allegory which likens the translator to the hunter: "When the hunter comes to a meadow or to a marsh rich with game he is enveloped by a merry expectation of a happy hunting. At the same time, he strains all his strength to make the hunting successful. For this, he must show his knowledge of birds' habits and they are quite different: snipe has its own, great snipe – its own; duck's habits are quite peculiar. The hunter must also take into consideration the relief, wind

direction, etc.; finally, he's expected to demonstrate his shooting skills! Something like this can be said about a literary translator who begins his work with a piece of fiction. Here's his faith in future accomplishments, and acknowledgment of considerable hardships, and mobilization of all his knowledge, experience, technical devices which are to be employed differently every time depending upon the author's individuality" [Rylskyi 1975: 79].

Summing up: translation doesn't only stand as a source of creative self-improvement of all the involved individuals, but also forms a strong foundation for sustained cultural growth all over the world due to the attraction of more people to its orbit. With this statement, we move on to the final task of our research.

### **2.3. Translation as an important element of forming cultural continuum**

Global science has finally acknowledged translation's huge role in the creation of national and international cultural spaces. Translation unites countries, nations, and cultures on both synchronic (in a geographical plane) and diachronic (on a time scale) levels. In the aspect of (inter)cultural cooperation, we would like to accentuate the creative nature of translation because the term "creativity" itself implies both an individual's activity and produced by him/her values, which gradually transform from the facts of one's personal life into those of culture. Translation doesn't only shape separate national cultures, it also allows to grasp the unity of the world culture as a testimony of humankind's consolidation at the dawn of the third millennium. In the process of studying multifaceted intercultural ties, the readiness of a particular national culture to perceive and process everything new in the area of linguistic and literary creativity should be confirmed by the level of its involvement into the world's translation practices. That is why, among numerous functions of translation as a social universal, its role of the facilitator of interlinguistic, interliterary, and, finally, intercultural dialogue occupies a place of honour.

N. Bevez considers translation "a necessary link in the assimilation of international thought by Ukrainian culture and all intellectual community" since the majority of outstanding philosophers of the past and present revealed themselves only "when started to talk Ukrainian" [Bevez 2011: 38]. Relation between translation and society's cultural evolution is reciprocal: on the one hand, translations into Ukrainian assist in the further construing of the Ukrainian language; on the other hand, "translation requires its own language" as the translator "works in accordance with the ideas of the author whose text he's dealing with" [Horskyi 2001: 57].

Most cultures have been formed with the participation and under the influence of translation and following transference on a new cultural ground of genres, motives, plots, traditions, and the way of living in general. All these factors provide for the culture-shaping function of translation. As A. Lefevre puts it, "mainly translations, deeply affect the interpenetration of literary systems, not just by projecting the image of one writer or [his] work in another literature... but also by introducing new devices into the inventory component of a poetics and paving the way to changes in its functional component" [Lefevre 1992: 38]. At the same time, the translator's work today is affected by the fact that due to the intensification of cultural exchanges the languages simply do not have enough time and strength to renovate one another.

In the context of dividing cultures translation-wise into "primary" (whose construction relied largely on translation) and "secondary" (whose construction was not largely influenced by translation), we should stress that since Kievan Rus translated literature has been playing an extremely important role in Ukraine's cultural life as a protector of spiritual values, as an educational tool, and as a means of self-expression and enrichment of the native language and literature. Thus, translation became a historical event supporting the coexistence of Ukrainian culture with those of different nations.

Another side of translation is connected with overcoming cultural barriers which, according to S. Ter-Minasova, are far more dangerous than linguistic ones because "they are hidden behind the curtain of confidence that one's own culture is the only possible, correct, and normative (simply normal) one; and realization of these barriers only takes place in people's communication during the

conflict between one's own and foreign cultures" [Ter-Minasova 2008: 68]. This statement contains a precondition for the translator's professional improvement, because any kind of a conflict is always a source of evolution. Overcoming cultural barriers is possible with the help of the principle of cultural relativism according to which an individual's behaviour (including speech) can only be evaluated within his/her culture and never from the position of the evaluator's culture whose standards may find such a behaviour nonsensical or even barbaric.

Cultural-philosophic meaning of translation is supported by the fact that it can be used as a means of bonding every time where a threat of a cultural split or collision appears. Translation provides a foundation for uniting different nations on a joint cultural platform in a sort of a cultural synthesis – "an immanent process of culture, language, skills, ability to generalize new sense emerging from creative human search" [Ryabova 2008: 173]. Synthesizing cultural diversity is an eternal problem of human civilization while its absence can pose a permanent threat to it.

Finally, translation's creative role can be analyzed from the standpoint of V. Bibler's "concept of dialogism" which describes the dialogue of different cultures as "a continuous unfolding and construing of new meanings of each cultural phenomenon, cultural image, cultural piece of work that join in a single dialogue, that is unfolding and construing a personality... capable of deepening, developing, re-shaping his/her inner self, his/her unique being in response to the addressee's (reader's, listener's, observer's) accord or discord" [Bibler 1991]. Intercultural dialogue conducted by the means of translation presents an opposition "own culture – foreign culture" which can be described as mutual attraction and mutual repulsion of opposite cultural poles. Such a dualism of translation is necessary for constructing cultural continuum as a new meaning, new creativeness, and new stage of human evolution.

### 3. Conclusion

In our research, we attempted to analyze global creative function of translation that helps establish and develop culture on a universal scale since the majority of national cultures were constructed under the influence of translation. In the context of Ukraine's historical and contemporary (post-colonial) realia, it is translated literature that plays a role of a cultural catalyst, transmitter of ideas, and defender of spiritual values on both synchronic (from language and/or culture to language and/or culture) and diachronic (from period to period) levels. The **prospect** of further research lies in the elaboration of the philosophical theory of translation.

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**Oleksandr Rebrii** – Professor, Head of Mykola Lukash Translation Studies Department, Vasyl Karazin Kharkiv National University, 4, Maidan Svobody, room 7-76, Kharkiv; email: rebriy@vega.com.ua; ORCID <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-4912-7489>; Google Scholar <https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=ak5-nc8AAAAJ&hl=en>

**Олександр Володимирович Ребрій** – доктор філологічних наук, професор, завідувач кафедри перекладознавства імені Миколи Лукаша ХНУ імені В.Н. Каразіна. Майдан Свободи, 4, к. 7-76. м. Харків; email: rebriy@vega.com.ua; ORCID <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-4912-7489>; Google Scholar <https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=ak5-nc8AAAAJ&hl=en>

**Александр Владимирович Ребрій** – доктор филологических наук, профессор, заведующий кафедрой переводоведения имени Мьколы Лукаша ХНУ имени В.Н. Каразина. Площадь Свободы, 4, к. 7-76. г. Харьков; email: rebriy@vega.com.ua; ORCID <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-4912-7489>; Google Scholar <https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=ak5-nc8AAAAJ&hl=en>