

SCHLEIERMACHER

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The lecture 'On the Different Methods of Translating' ('Über die verschiedenen Methoden des Übersetzens') which Friedrich Schleiermacher delivered at the Berlin Academy of Sciences in June 1813 is widely regarded as the beginning of modern translation theory. It also represents Schleiermacher's most extensive statement on the subject of translation. To understand its core ideas we need to know something of Schleiermacher's views on language and languages, and on the nature of communication and understanding. We need to be aware of his work as a translator as well. This chapter therefore, after a brief introduction, sketches Schleiermacher's writings on ethics and dialectics, and then addresses his translation of Plato. These different strands come together in his work on hermeneutics, which provides the key to the 1813 lecture. The final paragraph adds a note drawn from Schleiermacher's talks on psychology. Contextualising the 1813 lecture in this way will show that the traditional, decontextualized reading of it as presenting a choice between two opposing ways of translating (either the translator brings the foreign author to the reader or he/she takes the reader to the foreign author) is misguided. Even the apparent parallelism in the choice does not in fact exist.

[Note: in the following pages, references not preceded by a name are to Schleiermacher's work.]

1 Introduction

Today Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher (1768-1834) is known principally as a liberal theologian who also spoke in favour of the emancipation of women and of Jews. He became a public intellectual during the turbulent years of the Napoleonic wars and contributed substantially to what we now know as German Romanticism. In recent years he has been increasingly appreciated as a philosopher. Early in his career he read the Ancient Greek and Roman thinkers as well as Leibniz and Spinoza; he was heir to some of Herder's ideas, a contemporary of Kant and Hegel, and familiar with the work of lesser figures such as Fichte and Schelling.

Schleiermacher studied at the University of Halle in 1787-90 and worked for a while as a private tutor and pastor. In the years around 1800, in the Berlin salon of the multilingual Henriette Herz, he became involved with the leading Romantic writers and intellectuals of the time, among them the brothers Friedrich and August Wilhelm Schlegel. He contributed to their short-lived but influential flagship journal *Athenaeum* and, at their instigation, published his first books (*On Religion*, 1799, and the effusive *Monologues*, 1800). He also undertook, initially with Friedrich Schlegel but then on his own, the translation into German of virtually the complete works of Plato; the first five volumes appeared as *Platons Werke* between 1804 and 1809, with a final sixth volume in 1828. He taught briefly at the University of Halle, but when in 1806 the town was overrun by Napoleon's troops and the university closed, he returned to Berlin, where he spent the rest of his life. While the French army occupied Prussia, Schleiermacher used his pulpit to preach resistance (Raack 1959; Vial 2005). In 1809 he played a role, alongside Wilhelm von Humboldt, in founding the University of Berlin. He served as its professor of theology and occasional dean for the next twenty-five years. He also became an active member of the Berlin Academy of Sciences, delivering some fifty lectures and

speeches there between 1811 and 1834. The 1813 lecture 'On the Different Methods of Translating' was just one of these (1858; Nowak 2002).

Schleiermacher wrote prolifically, but a large part of his output remained in manuscript until after his death. His collected writings were first published between 1834 and 1864. The authoritative critical edition of the complete work ('Kritische Gesamtausgabe'), currently in progress, is scheduled to comprise sixty-five volumes.

Most of what Schleiermacher issued in print during his lifetime is concerned with theology, although in terms of volume the Plato translation looms large. For his thinking about translation his writings on ethics, dialectics, hermeneutics and psychology are all relevant. Yet he himself did not publish anything at all, or very little, in these fields. He did however lecture on them at the University of Halle and then in Berlin. What we have on these subjects, therefore, are lecture notes, by himself or sometimes by students, as well as various outlines and drafts from different periods in his life. He lectured on ethics at Halle in 1804-05 and in Berlin in 1808 (before the university was formally opened), 1812-13, 1816, 1824, 1827 and 1832 (1981: xiv). The lectures on dialectics took place in Berlin in 1811, 1814-15, 1818-19, 1822, 1828 and 1831 (2002a, 1: xxv-xxvi). He gave lectures on hermeneutics first at Halle in 1805 and then in Berlin in 1809-10, 1810-11, 1814 and 1819, and several more times in the 1820s and early '30s (2012: xix-xxix). The lectures on psychology began in 1818 and were then held in 1822, 1830 and 1833-34 (1862: viii). The manuscripts that are unrelated to his lecturing are often difficult to date, and some contain later additions and comments. He appears to have drafted a book on hermeneutics around 1810, but lost the manuscript and started anew in 1819. He was working on a book on dialectics when he died in 1834. The writings on ethics and dialectics in particular are often forbiddingly abstract.

2 Ethics

Chronologically, Schleiermacher's interest in ethics came first. He planned to translate Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* as early as the late 1780s, when he was only around twenty years of age. In the next decade he published reflections on freedom, on sociability and on religious feeling, before composing a 'Draft towards an ethics' ('Brouillon zur Ethik') in 1805-06, as his lecturing on the subject got under way.

His ideas, in this as in other domains, take shape around binary oppositions, such as real versus ideal, individual versus community, or particularity versus what he refers to as the shared 'identity' of human nature in all. The oppositions are not exclusive but mutually dependent and in constant interaction (which he calls 'oscillation'), so that one concept cannot be thought without the other and neither is ever present in an absolute form. Consciousness of one's own self presupposes a contradistinction with those who are not part of this self. Human nature is the same in all but manifests itself differently in every individual. We are open to the world around us but also project our own cognitive schemata onto it. Recognising the specific thoughts that each of us entertains permits the positing of a level of ideal or pure reason.

Human beings, for all their individuality, have a natural tendency to communicate and thus to form communities. Communication, for Schleiermacher, means that something that was internal to one person, for instance a thought, is exteriorised and subsequently interiorised as the same thought by someone else. The means to achieve this is language: what is expression for the speaker functions for the interlocutor as a sign. Successful transfer depends on a shared schematism, a common way of thinking (1981: 65; 2002b: 49).

Communication enables sociability. It requires not only expression of one's own personality but also a receptive openness to others, a willingness to contemplate difference. The task is paradoxical because, on one hand, it will never be possible to really grasp another person's individual nature, while, on the other, a common humanity must be assumed (Berner 1995: 189-90). Sociability and individuality, although opposed, go together. The essence of sociability consists in respecting the other's closed world while inviting it to open itself up and, simultaneously, making ourselves available to others keen to get to know us ('das Wesen der Geselligkeit, welches besteht in der Anerkennung fremden Eigenthums, um es sich aufzuschließen zu lassen, und in der Aufschließung des eigenen, um es anerkennen zu lassen'; 1981: 265).

The uniqueness of each person's individuality however remains inaccessible to others, and thus untranslatable; already the 'Brouillon zur Ethik' equates 'Eigentümlichkeit' ('individuality') with 'Unübertragbarkeit' ('non-transferability') (1977: 361). The adjective 'eigentümlich' and its associated noun 'Eigentümlichkeit' ('individual, individuality') will be key words in the 1813 lecture on translation. Nevertheless, since self-expression draws on language and language is a means of communication, self-expression already contains within it a desire to be understood. In one sense, language also acts as a brake on idiosyncrasy. In a lecture on aesthetics Schleiermacher notes that, as a shared property and a relatively fixed system, language is not well equipped to express either strict singularity or fluidity ('die Bestimmtheit des Einzelnen'; 'das in sich Wechselnde'); it takes a creative artist to force it to do that (1977: 403).

Forms of sociability are determined primarily by language. Following Herder, Schleiermacher conceives of language as creating a bond, initially within the family, but then extending to the clan and from there to the nation. Nations and languages, like persons, have their own individuality (1981: 47; 2002b: 25). And since thinking and speaking are interdependent, communities speaking different languages also think differently. These differences constitute what Schleiermacher calls the 'irrationality' of language and of languages. The term, which is of prime importance and also appears in the 1813 lecture on translation (2002: 70; 2012a: 46), denotes the non-isomorphism and incommensurability between different ways of thinking and speaking (1830: 57). The 'Brouillon zur Ethik' already referred to ideas in a work of art as being 'irrational' in that they resist understanding ('daß die darin enthaltene Idee irrational ist gegen das Verstehen'; 1977: 362), in a passage explaining the impossibility of ever reaching full understanding of another's discourse. In his outline of dialectics of 1814-15 Schleiermacher speaks of the 'irrationality' of the individual person as being counteracted by the use of language as such (1988: 109), because, as we just saw, language is always shared with others and, as he puts it in a draft on ethics in 1812-13, it imposes a degree of commonality on even the most individual thought (1981: 68-69; 1977: 410). Irrationality, then, is not absolute, but increases the further languages and cultural traditions are removed from each other.

If irrationality troubles the relatively leisurely type of communication at the heart of sociability, it also haunts the more purposeful form of dialogue that drives dialectics.

3 Dialectics

Dialectics is concerned with the search for knowledge that would be both absolute and certain. The reasoning, in true German Idealist fashion, is that if individuals can gain a certain degree and kind of knowledge about a portion of the world, then the idea of complete knowledge that would be true to the whole world and shared by all, can be posited. Knowledge as it resides in individual languages, Schleiermacher says in an Academy lecture in 1830, stands to absolute knowledge like refracted rays

of light to light as such (2002: 675). Reason points the way towards such knowledge. Reason is universal and all humans possess a fraction of it, each in their own way. While universal knowledge will remain an unattainable ideal, it acts as a regulatory principle in that it must be aspired to. Indeed, in practice, 'the whole history of our knowledge is an approximation to it' (2002a, 1: 149).

This approximation has to start from concrete reality and real people, and therefore from the recognition of difference, with the aim of reaching consensus. Taking his cue from Plato, Schleiermacher conceives of dialectics as dialogue, an exchange of ideas (2002a, 1: 81). The ideas themselves as well as their exchange require language. For the individual, knowledge that is more than vague intuition or a jumble of impressions can become cogent knowledge only when it is articulated in language. Thinking is silent speaking, as Schleiermacher never tires of repeating.

Knowledge becomes socially productive when it is shared with others. But communication, as we saw, is an uncertain undertaking. The search for perfect knowledge and consensus should therefore begin where the risk is lowest, that is, within one language. This is already difficult enough, due to the inaccessibility of the thoughts of individuals. The difficulties increase exponentially when knowledge is negotiated across languages, as in every field of knowledge different languages embody an ineradicable difference ('eine unaustilgbare Differenz') in ways of thinking (2002a, 1: 403). Schleiermacher refers to Cicero to drive the point home. Compare, he says, the self-assurance with which Cicero writes philosophy in his native Latin with the apprehension he betrays when he is translating from Greek; in the latter case he is like any other Roman, 'for whom the value of the translated Greek remained foreign' ('ein Römer, dem der Werth des wiedergegebenen griechischen fremd war'; 2002a, 1: 402).

Like ethics, then, dialectics comes up against the irrationality of languages, and Schleiermacher supplies illustrations that are devastating for any concept of translation as the integral transfer of meaning or ideas. 'No knowledge in two languages can be regarded as completely the same, not even [the concept of] thing and A=A' ('Kein Wissen in zwei Sprachen kann als ganz dasselbe angesehen werden; auch Ding und A=A nicht'), he notes in the 1814-15 draft on dialectics (2002a, 1: 98). He argues in the same passage that even mathematics, despite its language-independent notation, is thought differently in different cultural traditions. In one of his lectures on psychology he adds similar examples, from the top and the bottom end of the linguistic spectrum. Different words for 'and', he explains with reference to German 'und', Latin 'et' and Greek και (kai), are not equivalent because they have different usages; and the German word for God ('Gott') differs from its Latin or Greek counterparts in that it is rarely used in the plural and then only to reflect foreign conceptions (1862: 173). The 1813 lecture on translation remarks in the same vein that not even the words 'God' and 'to be' are the same across languages (2002: 89; 2012a: 60).

The incompatibility between languages grows the more distant they are. In the 1832-33 manuscript of his dialectics Schleiermacher, clearly reflecting contemporary developments in comparative Indo-European linguistics (one of its pioneers, Franz Bopp, had been his colleague in Berlin since 1821), observes that, despite linguistic affinities stretching from Europe to India, the various local traditions are so different it is hard to find common philosophical ground. If this is true within the Indo-European sphere, what about cultures beyond it (2002a, 1: 405-6)?

Yet a universal language would not be the solution. Schleiermacher rejects the idea on several grounds. Its construction would be a logical impossibility since agreement on it would have to be reached in existing languages, making the universal tongue redundant. In any case, linguistic differences are valuable in themselves because their sum total reflects the richness of the human mind (2002a, 1: 404). Where a dead language like Latin has been employed as a transnational

vehicle, its use has remained restricted to a social elite and, lacking the vibrancy of a living tongue, it would struggle to accommodate unfamiliar modes of thought (1862: 179).

In his 1811 lecture notes on dialectics Schleiermacher mentions another alternative to deal with the irrationality of languages. It consists in focusing on broader discursive and conceptual issues rather than on the non-synonymy of individual items: 'I cannot appropriate an alien singularity, I have to reconstruct it through the way the foreign concept is formed' ('Das Einzelne fremde kann ich mir nicht aneignen; aber ich soll es in der fremden Begriffsbildung nachconstruiren'; 2002a, 1: 59). It may not be immediately clear what he means, but his own translation of Plato provides a clue.

4 Plato

When he tackled Plato around 1800, Schleiermacher was already an experienced translator. Apart from the *Nicomachean Ethics* mentioned above, he had rendered Aristotle's *Politics* into German but the translation remained in manuscript. Also in the 1790s he took to translating from English, a travelogue by Mungo Park and sermons by Hugh Blair and Joseph Fawcett, the latter comprising two volumes. But the translation of Plato was of a different order, and occupied him for several years (Lamm 2000, 2005). Covering the virtually complete works of Plato (minus *Laws* and *Timaeus*), it became an epoch-making version, not only for the quality of the rendering itself but also for the various introductions in which Schleiermacher offered comprehensive interpretations of the entire Platonic corpus (Schleiermacher 2000). These introductions were soon valued in their own right and appeared in English as early as 1836.

His preparation for the task was meticulous. He established a chronology for the separate dialogues and sought to understand each dialogue in its relation with all the others, and the work as a whole with reference to the individual dialogues. He also tried to grasp Plato's relation to the Greek language of the time, arguing that we need to know where Plato was constrained by the language at his disposal and where, being an artist as well as a philosopher, he was creatively shaping it in unusual ways. Plato, Schleiermacher argued, was crafting a philosophical Greek discourse even though the language was not quite ready for it. At the same time, as a Greek thinker, he thought in Greek.

Schleiermacher's German translation sought to give the German reader an inkling of this linguistic complexity and of the coherence of the entire oeuvre (Jantzen 1996). To achieve this, he followed two distinct routes. The first was captured by one of his friends, who read the translation in manuscript and praised it for 'nestling up to the original, without overdoing it' ('Anschmiegung ans Original, mit Vermeidung des Punkthaften'; 2005: 166). Indeed, the translation often makes German follow the word order or even particular word formations of the Greek. These syntactic and morphological calques remind the reader, in German, that Plato is not a German but a Greek writer, and that his way of thinking and expression differs from standard German ways.

But Schleiermacher took another route, too. In some dialogues Plato ironically plays with the language, showing his mastery of it. In the *Cratylus*, for instance, a dialogue largely devoted to discussions about language, he lets his alter ego, Socrates, invent all manner of spoof etymologies for particular Greek words. In his introduction to this dialogue Schleiermacher admitted that this presented a challenge: 'This etymological part became the translator's cross, and it took him a long time to find a way out' ('Dieser etymologische Theil ist nun das Kreuz des Uebersetzers geworden, und es hat ihm lange zu schaffen gemacht, einen Ausweg zu finden'; 1807: 20). He adopted a bold solution: the German translation fields a German-speaking Socrates who therefore offers 'German

German' linguistic derivations ('den einmal deutsch redenden Sokrates deutsches deutsch ableiten zu lassen'; 1807: 21). In the case of proper names, however, this solution was not possible, and here the German version had to insert the Greek words between brackets. The coexistence of both types of solution within the same translation, Schleiermacher adds, should make the reader aware of the problematical nature of the whole exercise.

The annotations following each of the translated dialogues dramatise these dilemmas. The annotations to *Cratylus*, for instance, frequently provide literal renderings from the Greek and then go on to explain that the translator has construed something equally fanciful using exclusively German words and derivations (e.g. 1807: 460, 461, 466, 468, 472). In *Phaedrus*, the opening dialogue in *Platons Werke*, he operates along similar lines, on one occasion basing another mocking etymology on a poem by August Wilhelm Schlegel published in 1800, just a few years before Schleiermacher's translation appeared in print and at the furthest possible remove from the world of Ancient Greek (1804: 101, 374; Hermans 2015: 87-88). The conspicuous anachronies show, in German, Schleiermacher's understanding of Plato and of Plato's relation to Greek, while also counteracting the Greek-leaning flavour of Schleiermacher's German in other parts of the translation.

5 Hermeneutics

Shortly before the first volume of his Plato translation appeared in print, Schleiermacher remarked in a letter to his publisher that 'not only was there much to be elucidated as regards Plato, but Plato was the right author to demonstrate understanding as such' ('Es ist nicht nur am Plato selbst gar Vieles aufzuklären, sondern der Plato ist auch der rechte Schriftsteller um überhaupt das Verstehen anschaulich zu machen'; 2005: 3). If understanding Plato was a precondition for translating him, translating Plato afforded insight into the art of understanding. In 1805, within a year of the publication of the first Plato volume, Schleiermacher began to outline a general theory of hermeneutics (2003: I-ii). Hermeneutics, in turn, supplies the most direct key to Schleiermacher's pronouncements on translation, including the 1813 lecture.

Hermeneutics, ethics and dialectics are closely interlinked. As social beings, humans seek communication and community; they desire to be understood even as they project their inalienable individuality. Dialectics sets absolute and certain knowledge as its aim, but has to proceed from concrete, individualised knowledge and to build dialogue on difference. Difference is also where hermeneutics begins. Understanding must be actively sought so as to overcome misunderstanding or uncertainty (1977: 92; 1998: 227-28; 2012: 127). The danger of misunderstanding is smallest within close-knit units like families, it is more or less manageable within one and the same language, and it is greatest across languages, because 'every language becomes the repository of a particular system of concepts and ways of combining,' as he puts it in the ethics lectures of 1812-13 (2002b: 82; 'in jeder Sprache ein eigenthümliches System von Begriffen und von Combinationsweisen niedergelegt ist'; 1981: 109). Negotiating these problems takes both discipline and imagination: hermeneutics is an art in that it is bound by rules, but there are no rules governing the application of the rules (1811: 38).

Not every text presents a hermeneutic challenge. When language merely repeats what is already known, or when it is transparent as in "common discourse in business matters and in habitual conversation in everyday life" (1998: 7; 1977: 76), hermeneutic effort is not required. The more language and thought are individual and original, however, the more hermeneutic effort and

study are needed. Even then complete understanding will not be attained: hermeneutics remains an unending task, its outcomes forever conjectural (1977a: 41; 2012: 219). Full understanding, or what Schleiermacher in a lecture of 1829 calls 'a heightened understanding' ('ein erhöhtes Verständnis'; 1977: 324), means understanding a discourse better than the speaker understood it himself, because it brings to consciousness what remained unconscious to the speaker and makes explicit the speaker's relation to the language (2012: 39, 75, 114, 128; 1998: 228, 266).

Hermeneutic study is demanding because it has to take in the relevant context, genre and period (1977a: 46; 1998: 231, 257). The level of difficulty increases the further we move away from our immediate surroundings. Only our native language is available to us in its naturally grown fullness; our access to utterances in foreign languages is inevitably fragmentary because, not having grown up in the foreign world, we can never acquire more than partial knowledge of their context (1977: 84). In a hermeneutics lecture of 1819 he remarks that 'man grows into his own language to such an extent that it is almost as hard to step out of one's language as it is to step out of one's skin' ('Der Mensch ist so hineingewachsen in seine Sprache, daß es nicht viel leichter ist, aus seiner Sprache, als aus seiner Haut herauszugehen'; 2012: 244).

The actual process of gaining understanding follows two paths simultaneously, which Schleiermacher calls grammatical and technical interpretation (2012: 75, 121; 1977a: 42); in later writings technical interpretation is also called psychological or divinatory. The distinction reflects, on one hand, the interdependence of language and thought, and, on the other, the dual notion of language as both a supra-personal system and a malleable instrument that creative individuals can bend to their will.

The two approaches are complementary, but, methodologically, grammatical interpretation comes first (2012: 101; 1977: 69-70; 1998: 232). Whereas grammatical interpretation concerns the utterance as a specimen of language, technical interpretation eyes the person who speaks and their thinking (2012: 75-76; 1977: 68; 1998: 229). In grammatical interpretation 'a speaker is regarded entirely as the organ of language', more particularly of the state of the language at the time the utterance was produced (1977: 85, 94; 1998: 230). Each language sets a limit to what can be said or thought in it. Technical interpretation proceeds as if one was trying to get to know the language from the speaker's discourse (1998: 230); it seeks insight into the speaker's individuality, and the linguistic expression of this individuality is what Schleiermacher calls style (2012: 102; 1998: 254-55; Pfau 1990). If grammatical interpretation investigates the state of the language at a given moment in its development and yields relatively certain knowledge, technical interpretation is both more dynamic and more speculative: it requires imaginative leaps on the part of the exegete who is now dealing with the innovations and transgressions of particular speakers imposing their will on the language and, through their interventions, forcing change on it. The complementarity between grammatical and technical interpretation appears also in what later became known as the hermeneutic circle: 'One must already know a man in order to understand what he says, and yet one first becomes acquainted with him by what he says' (1977a: 56; 2012: 25).

What is probably the first printed statement of Schleiermacher's hermeneutic principles appeared in his *Kurze Darstellung des theologischen Studiums* ('Brief Outline of the Study of Theology') of 1811, a book concerned with the interpretation of canonical Christian works, especially the New Testament. The edition of 1811 was followed by a second, enlarged version in 1830.

The New Testament was written in Greek, even though most Christians in later ages read it in translation. Jesus of Nazareth and his disciples, however, spoke Aramaic, and the Greek of the

New Testament still shows the Aramaic palimpsest underneath it. Schleiermacher's comments on these issues, in three short paragraphs, are telling:

§16. No discourse can be fully understood except in the original language. Not even the most perfect translation overcomes the irrationality of language.

§ 17. Even translations can be fully understood only by someone who is conversant with the original language.

§18. Although the original language of the canon is Greek, much of it is translated directly from the Aramaic, and even more should be regarded as indirectly translated. (1850: 139-40)

(§16. Keine Rede kann vollständig verstanden werden als in der Ursprache. Auch die vollkommenste Uebersetzung hebt die Irrationalität der Sprache nicht auf.

§ 17. Auch Uebersetzungen versteht nur derjenige vollkommen, der zugleich mit der Ursprache bekannt ist.

§18. Die Ursprache des Kanon ist zwar griechisch, vieles aber ist unmittelbar Uebersetzung aus dem Aramäischen, und noch mehreres ist mittelbar so anzusehen; 1811: 37)

'Irrationality,' as the mark of difference, may not be absolute but it cannot be wholly eradicated within a language, much less across languages, where equivalence does not exist. Translation cannot undo the irrationality of language. Strictly speaking, Schleiermacher notes in his draft *General Hermeneutics* of 1809-10, there are no synonyms even within the same language (2012: 94). Learning a foreign language, he notes in 1819, makes us 'reduce' foreign words to presumed mother-tongue equivalents, but this often ensnares us in errors (2012: 137-38; 1977: 112). The exegete seeking to understand a translation is therefore charged with interpreting the original as well as the translation, and to appreciate the translation as an interpretation of the original.

The reference to New Testament Greek being a translation of sorts shows that Schleiermacher is perfectly aware of hybrid language. The New Testament writers, he suggests, were relatively simple people. Except for Paul, they were not quite capable of fully exploiting the resources of Greek. Apart from spoken Aramaic they also drew on the Hebrew of the Old Testament, and infused old Jewish terms with new Christian meanings. In addition, the Greek they wrote often harked back to the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament (2012: 130; 1977: 158; 1998: 82). The exegete needs to weigh these dependencies and remain alive to what Schleiermacher calls 'the language-forming power of Christianity' in the New Testament (1998: 86; 2012: 124, 205; 1977: 162), because the novel ideas of a new religion demanded innovative speech (1977: 382). Historical hindsight often dulls the freshness of what was once new but has become mainstream; in a later addition to his hermeneutic manuscripts Schleiermacher mentions Plato as just such a linguistic innovator, forging a written philosophical discourse out of everyday conversations in a manner that is hard for us moderns to appreciate (1977: 103). In a lecture of 1832 he broadened this out to the general statement that intellectual developments trigger linguistic change ('wenn in einem Volke eine geistige Entwicklung vorgeht, so entsteht auch eine Sprachentwicklung'; 1977: 90).

The combination of, on the one hand, the 'irrationality' of language and, on the other, the various factors which converge in singular ways in particular texts makes both hermeneutic understanding and translation challenging. This does not mean they are impossible. No-one can step outside their own skin, but in interpreting someone else's thought one must set one's own thoughts aside in favour of the other person's, as Schleiermacher stressed already in his earliest notes on

hermeneutics (2012: 7; 1977a: 42); to do otherwise is to sacrifice the understanding of otherness to the pursuit of one's own ends (1977: 213). In his very first lecture to the Academy, in 1811, he charged modern scholars of ancient thought with merely projecting their own ideas on the thinking of the ancients (2002: 33-34). But, as he recognised in a hermeneutics lecture of 1819, a special talent is needed to 'think oneself into' foreign languages ('Es ist ein Talent, sich in fremde Sprachen hineinzudenken'; 2012: 244). It is a talent translators cannot do without.

6 'On the Different Methods of Translating'

Schleiermacher delivered his lecture 'On the Different Methods of Translating' ('Über die verschiedenen Methoden des Übersetzens') on two occasions at the Berlin Academy of Sciences, first to its philological section on 24 June 1813, then to the Academy's full session on 3 July. The time was one of heightened national sentiment in the wake of Napoleon's ignominious retreat from Russia six months earlier, and indeed Schleiermacher's journalism in the spring and summer of 1813 was concerned almost exclusively with the political and military situation (Meding 1992: 38-45). There is no evidence he attached much importance to the lecture on translation, or that it made any impact. He dashed it off in less than four days (2002: xxxii). On the evening of its first presentation he spoke of it as 'a rather trivial piece' ('ein ziemlich triviales Zeug' 2002: xxxiii). He does not appear to refer back to it in any of his later writings. The text was printed in the Academy's Transactions (which were not sent out for review) in 1816 and then in Schleiermacher's posthumous Collected Works, but it remained forgotten until its reprint in Hans-Joachim Störig's anthology *Das Problem des Übersetzens* ('The problem of translation') of 1963. The current high regard for it among scholars of translation is due to the work of Antoine Berman (1992) and Lawrence Venuti (2008: 83-98).

The lecture amounts to neither more nor less than the application of hermeneutics to translation. From a hermeneutic point of view, translation is nothing special: it simply means the extension of hermeneutic principles from the intralingual to the interlingual. At the same time, it is very special, due to the irrationality of language which is at its most acute here, and to the fact that, in order to articulate their understanding of the foreign text, translators have at their disposal only their own tongue as they address readers unfamiliar with the foreign tongue.

Schleiermacher opens his lecture by pointing out that the term translation, broadly conceived, can cover both intralingual and interlingual renderings, but he restricts it to the latter nevertheless. He also disposes of the oral interpreter ('Dolmetscher') in favour of the 'translator proper' (2012a: 44; 'der eigentliche Uebersetzer' 2002: 68) who is concerned with written discourse. For the hermeneuticist, written discourse presents more of a challenge because, as Plato said in the *Phaedrus*, written discourse can dispense with the presence of a speaker and does not permit the kind of conversational exchanges during which interlocutors can clear up misunderstandings. Written discourse, Schleiermacher notes, is also the proper medium of the arts and sciences – where science ('Wissenschaft') appears to mean primarily philosophy; later in the lecture he cites Plato as a typical exponent of science; 2012a: 60; 2002: 90).

Schleiermacher associates the world of commerce with oral interpreting because, he says, there the spoken word is the common currency (2012a: 44; 2002: 68). But translating journalism and travel literature are also more like oral interpreting than like translation proper because in these genres the subject-matter is the sole concern, everyone is familiar with the things being referred to, the phrases used are no more than counters determined by law or convention, and so speakers are readily understood ('schlechthin verständlich'; 2002: 70). Clearly, Schleiermacher is talking about

texts which hold no hermeneutic challenge and so have 'zero' or minimum value in hermeneutic terms. Translating these texts is a mechanical exercise (2012a: 45; 2002: 70).

Translation proper, then, is concerned with hermeneutically challenging language and thought. In these texts the author's individual way of seeing and of making connections ('des Verfassers eigenthümliche Art zu sehen und zu verbinden'; 2002: 69) prevails, and 'the author's free individual combinatory faculties' (2012a: 45; 'das freie eigenthümliche combinatorische Vermögen des Verfassers'; 2002: 69) work on the language in such a way that substance and expression become inseparable. Schleiermacher's use of 'eigenthümlich', a term familiar from his other work, is key here: between them the adjective 'eigenthümlich' and the corresponding noun 'Eigenthümlichkeit' (he spells both with an 'h' in the middle) occur no fewer than eighteen times in the lecture, an insistence obscured in the English translations (1977b; 2002c; 2012a), which distribute the terms over different words ('particular', 'individual', 'peculiar', 'special' and corresponding nouns). The subject-matter in texts of this kind 'comes into existence only through being uttered and exists only in this utterance' (2012a: 45; 'erst durch die Rede geworden und nur zugleich mit ihr da ist'; 2002: 69) and we encounter 'thought that is one with speech' (2012a: 46; 'der Gedanke [...], der mit der Rede eins ist'; 2002: 71).

Transplanting these texts – the shift from a mechanical to an organic metaphor is deliberate, and Schleiermacher consistently invokes organic metaphors when speaking of 'proper' translation (2002: 67, 70, 79, 80, 83, 92, 93) – poses formidable problems, for two reasons. One is the irrationality of languages (2002: 70), the non-existence of cross-lingual equivalence. The other recalls the dual orientation towards language that is present in every utterance worth hermeneutic attention. On one hand, all speakers are in the power of language, which has 'preordained' (2012a: 46; 'vorgezeichnet'; 2002: 71) what can be thought and said in it. On the other, creative minds shape the 'tractable' (2012a: 46; 'bildsam'; 2002: 70) material of language to their own designs. This dual orientation of utterances reflects the distinction between grammatical and technical interpretation in Schleiermacher's hermeneutics. It is subsequently elaborated in exactly these terms in the first key passage in the lecture:

Now if understanding works of this sort is already difficult even in the same language and involves immersing oneself in both the spirit of the language and the writer's characteristic nature, how much yet nobler an art must it be when we are speaking of the products of a foreign and distant tongue! To be sure, whoever has mastered this art of understanding by studying the language with diligence, acquiring precise knowledge of the entire historical life of a people and picturing keenly before him the individual works and their authors – *he*, to be sure, and he alone is justified in desiring to bring to his countrymen and contemporaries just this same understanding of these masterworks of art and science (2012a: 47).

(Wenn nun das Verstehen auf diesem Gebiet selbst in der gleichen Sprache schon schwierig ist, und ein genaues und tiefes Eindringen in den Geist der Sprache und in die Eigenthümlichkeiten des Schriftstellers in sich schließt: wie vielmehr nicht wird es eine hohe Kunst sein, wenn von den Erzeugnissen einer fremden und fernen Sprache die Rede ist! Wer denn freilich diese Kunst des Verstehens sich angeeignet hat, durch die eifrigsten Bemühungen um die Sprache, und durch genaue Kenntniß von dem ganzen geschichtlichen Leben des Volks, und durch die lebendigste Vergegenwärtigung einzelner Werke und ihrer Urheber, den freilich, aber auch nur *den*, kann es gelüsten von den Meisterwerken der Kunst

und Wissenschaft das gleiche Verständniß auch seinen Volks- und Zeitgenossen zu eröffnen; 2002: 72).

In this remarkable passage the hermeneutic project becomes the precondition for translating. Understanding in one's own language is already hard if the dual orientation of a discourse to the language as such and to the peculiarities ('Eigenthümlichkeiten') of the individual author are taken into account. Understanding works in a distant tongue deserves even more to be called a high art ('eine hohe Kunst'). This is so because a foreign language will always be available in fragmentary form only: the exegete has not grown up in and with the foreign idiom and can therefore only ever grasp it partially and imperfectly, as an outsider. Becoming proficient in this most exacting division of the hermeneutic endeavour demands practice and dedication. Schleiermacher is emphatic on this point, rather more so than Susan Bernofsky's English rendering suggests: this proficiency is acquired through studying the language not just 'with diligence' but with *the greatest* diligence ('die eifrigsten Bemühungen'), *and through* detailed historical study, *and through* – the repetition of 'durch..., und durch..., und durch' is insistent – imaginative engagement with individual works and their authors. Only someone thoroughly versed in the art and travail of hermeneutics can dream of translating. And translating in turn consists in putting before the audience exactly that understanding of the foreign work which the translator has been able to achieve: the prolonged labour of "Verstehen" ('understanding') results in an end product, 'Verständniß' ('understanding'), which now has to be articulated in the translator's language. Schleiermacher devotes most of the rest of the lecture to explicating what this means.

The task seems impossible, 'an utterly foolish undertaking' (2012a: 47). The translator has to make the reader understand ('verstehen,' 2002: 72) not only the spirit of the foreign language ('den Geist der Sprache') in which the author felt at home ('einheimisch') and the latter's particular ('eigenthümlich') way of thinking and feeling as it is articulated in that language, he also needs to intimate to his readers the understanding ('Verständniß') he himself has reached, the effort ('Mühe') it took to get there, the pleasure ('Genuß') it yielded, and the feeling of the foreign ('das Gefühl des fremden') that continues to inhere in the insight gained. The difficulty, specific to translation and consequent upon the hermeneutic engagement with the original, consists in the fact that, to give voice to all this and provide the reader with a vicarious experience similar to his own, the translator has only his own language.

It is at this point, and after he has cleared away two alternatives, paraphrase and imitation, which he says both sidestep the challenge, that Schleiermacher posits the two well-known options open to the translator: 'Either the translator leaves the writer in peace as much as possible and moves the reader towards him; or he leaves the reader in peace as much as possible and moves the writer towards him' (2012a: 49). The dichotomy, however, is not real. The second option is mentioned only to be dismissed. The first option is not what it seems either, as we shall see. Let us deal with the second option first.

This method, bringing the author to the reader, would have the translator write what the foreign author would have written had he not been foreign. But, Schleiermacher argues, if the author had grown up in our tongue, he would have been a different person entertaining different thoughts. This option assumes that the same thoughts can be thought in two different languages and that consequently thinking and language can exist separately. Schleiermacher rejects this belief as an untenable 'fiction' (2012a: 61; 'Fiction'; 2002: 91) and in so doing declares the very foundation of this method invalid. He contrasts it with his own conviction, which affirms the principle of the

identity of language and thought as underpinning all understanding, all hermeneutics and therefore all translating ('...the inner, essential identity between thought and expression – and this conviction forms the basis for the entire art of understanding speech and thus of all translation as well'; 2012a: 56; '...daß wesentlich und innerlich Gedanke und Ausdruck ganz dasselbe sind, und auf dieser Ueberzeugung beruht doch die ganze Kunst alles Verstehens der Rede, und also auch alles Uebersetzens,' 2002: 85). It follows that the aim of the method of bringing the author to the reader is 'null and void' (2012a: 56; 'nichtig und leer'; 2002: 85), its applicability stands at 'well-nigh zero' (2012a: 59; 'fast gleich null'; 2002: 89), its practice mostly resembles either paraphrase or imitation, and so it does not even qualify as proper translation at all ('dies würde streng genommen gar kein Uebersetzen sein'; 2002: 91). At best, renderings made in this vein can prepare the ground: a nation not yet ready for proper translation may use imitation and paraphrase to feed an appetite for the foreign ('Lust am Fremden') and thus pave the way towards a more general understanding ('ein allgemeineres Verstehen'; 2002: 76).

In fact, moving the reader to the author, the apparent opposite of the previous option, is equally impossible, but for a different reason. The translator can gain at best a partial, fragmentary understanding of the foreign author. With even the translator denied full access, there can be no question of the reader being transported to the author. The point at which author and reader meet can only be the translator:

The two separate parties must be united either at some point between the two – and that will always be the position of the translator – or else the one must betake himself to the other, and only one of these two possibilities lies within the realm of translation (2012a: 49).

(Die beiden getrennten Partheien müssen entweder an einem mittleren Punkt zusammentreffen, und das wird immer der des Uebersetzers sein, oder die eine muß sich ganz zur andern verfügen, und hiervon fällt nur die eine Art in das Gebiet der Uebersetzung; 2002: 75).

The alternative, which for Schleiermacher falls outside the realm of translation, would entail a reader becoming totally at home in the foreign language, or that language enveloping the reader to such an extent that he became a different person (*ibid.*). It is therefore the translator who moves, taking the reader with him, and both firmly stay within the confines of their own tongue. The translator acts as the hermeneuticist does: he works to attain the best possible understanding of the foreign text which nevertheless remains foreign, and then has to find a way to communicate to the reader unfamiliar with the foreign language exactly that understanding. In the process of seeking understanding the translator has moved some way towards the author, closer to the edge of his own tongue, so to speak. It is to this position, one foreign to the readers of the translation, that the translator moves his readers. This is the second key passage of the lecture:

...the translator endeavours through his labour to supply for the reader the understanding of the original language which the reader lacks. He seeks to communicate to the readers the exact same image, the exact same impression which he himself gained through his knowledge of the original language of the work as it is, and thus to move them to his own position, one in fact foreign to *them*. (2012a: 49) [the italicised word represents my correction of Susan Bernofsky's translation, which, erroneously, has '...foreign to him', TH].

(...ist der Uebersetzer bemüht, durch seine Arbeit dem Leser das Verstehen der Ursprache, das ihm fehlt, zu ersetzen. Das nämliche Bild, den nämlichen Eindruck, welchen er selbst durch die Kenntniß der Ursprache von dem Werke, wie es ist, gewonnen, sucht er den Lesern mitzutheilen, und sie also an seine ihnen eigentlich fremde Stelle hinzubewegen; 2002: 74-75).

The hard-won familiarity with foreign works and authors sets translators apart from their compatriots. But the impression of the foreign work to be conveyed remains that gained by one who has diligently studied a foreign tongue while remaining aware of its foreignness. True, there are those rare prodigies to whom no language feels foreign, but Schleiermacher views them as exceptions for whom the value of translation is nil (2002: 77-78). At the other end of the spectrum stands a plodding schoolboy understanding ('schülerhaftes Verstehen'; 2002: 76), which lacks a sense of the whole and its coherence – the kind of broader vision Schleiermacher had articulated in his Plato translation ten years earlier. Proper translation occupies the space between these extremes. It calls for an educated and dedicated translator proficient in the foreign language but for whom the foreignness of the foreign always remains ('...dem die fremde Sprache geläufig ist, aber doch immer fremde bleibt'; 2002: 78). The challenge for the translator is to deploy the translating language in such a way that it conveys to readers unfamiliar with the foreign language that particular sense of the foreign as it inhabits this specific work by this individual writer and as the translator, having looked over the fence, as it were, has apprehended it. Foreignness thus enters the translating language. This leads to Schleiermacher's observations on the translator creatively bending his language to the foreign tongue.

The form which that bending takes recalls Schleiermacher's Plato, which 'nestled up' to the original but left room for creative variation. Schleiermacher certainly does not mean strictly literal or metrical translation, which he dismisses as 'one-sided' (2012a: 52; 2002: 80). Rather, the translator must be granted a degree of linguistic flexibility. His discourse will in any case look less coherent than that of an original author who can build up a network of cognate keywords echoing one another across successive or related works (2012a: 52; 2002: 79). The remark echoes comments in the hermeneutic writings to the effect that we can gain only fragmentary knowledge of foreign cultures. Still, if the translating language is to accommodate the foreign ways of thinking embodied in the original, then the translator's usage will have to be innovative.

There is a wider, historical context as well. Schleiermacher projects the immature schoolboy grasp of the foreign on a national and temporal scale. In times when the educated part of a nation lacks a tradition of familiarity with foreign cultures, those who are ahead of their compatriots in dealing with the foreign cannot display their own more advanced understanding in their translations because they would not be understood (2012a: 50; 2002: 76). The comment recalls Schleiermacher's own anxiety, in a letter of 7 January 1804, that the German public might not have been ready for his Plato translation (2005: 186).

The conditions that enable proper translation to flourish, then, are twofold. It takes a language supple enough to be bent as required (French, caught in its neo-classical vice, will not do; 2002: 82, 92; 2012a: 54, 62), and a community of readers willing to accept unfamiliar linguistic usage. When these two conditions are met, a national translation culture can develop. The rhetorical finale of the 1813 lecture envisages a German nation obeying an 'inner necessity' to transplant foreign works, cultivating its national language 'through extensive contact with the foreign' and serving as a repository of the global treasure trove of culture (2012a: 62; 2002: 92). Schleiermacher

concedes that this vision has yet to materialise, but '[a] good beginning has been made' (*ibid.*). In a footnote to the printed version of the lecture he mentions Johann Heinrich Voss's four-volume translation of Homer (1793) and A.W. Schlegel's nine-volume Shakespeare (1797-1810) as shining examples of that beginning. No doubt he saw his own Plato translation as deserving a place in this list as well.

7 Approximation

The historical projection in the concluding paragraphs of Schleiermacher's 1813 lecture may look like a mere nationalistically inflected rhetorical flourish. It is more than that. In his 1812-13 manuscripts on ethics – contemporaneous with the lecture on translation – Schleiermacher notes how cross-cultural 'community' may arise from border traffic and is epitomised by language mixture ('Sprachmengerei'; 2002b: 87; 1981: 115), something the cultural centre will normally disavow and oppose. Nations being unequal, one will usually exert and the other undergo influence. However, if national feeling in the receiving nation is sufficiently strong, it will assert its individuality, and 'this tendency to bring national particularity comparatively to consciousness gives rise to a community of translations' ('Aus dieser Tendenz aber die Nationaleigenthümlichkeit comparativ zum Bewußtsein zu bringen, entsteht die Gemeinschaft der Uebersetzungen'; *ibid.*). Because it engages with the foreign as foreign, and puts the receiving language to work to create room for it, translation enables comparison, highlights cultural difference and serves as an index of national identity.

The somewhat later lectures on psychology add a twist to these ideas, complementing the notion of translation as marking difference with that of convergence and of approaching an ultimate goal. Discussing issues of linguistic diversity and cultural intertraffic, and using terminology reminiscent of his work on dialectics, Schleiermacher observes that 'as soon as several languages are in contact with one another, they also grow closer' ('Sobald dagegen mehrere Sprachen in Verkehr mit einander sind, so sind sie auch in einer beständigen Approximation begriffen'; 1862: 179). As each develops, the exchange of knowledge among them intensifies and becomes easier, and the project of total and shared knowledge begins to look a little less utopian. And this, he claims, is already happening. 'The idea of knowledge that would not be enclosed within the borders of one language but would be the same for everyone, arises from the simple fact that this approximation is steadily being realised' ('Die Idee von einem Wissen, welches nicht in den Grenzen einer bestimmten Sprache eingeschlossen sondern ein gleiches für alle sein soll, beruht lediglich darauf, daß diese Approximation immer mehr realisirt wird'; 1862: 180). But the road will be long, and just as the 1813 lecture on translation ended with a reminder of how much still needed to be done, so the lectures on psychology, too, stress the role of translation as marking at once the huge distance still to be travelled, the enormity of the task and the way in which it might nevertheless be accomplished:

If we remind ourselves how far we are still from this goal, and how little we have achieved in resolving the modes of thinking of other peoples into our own, then we are a long way from claiming that the representational capacity of any language has evolved to the point where it could absorb other modes of thought. In translating from one language into another the differences in the respective elements become particularly clear, giving rise to the obvious task of balancing them out through a special art of combination and thus to make the content similar, which can be done to a certain degree. But this latter operation only then becomes truly approximative, when one simultaneously thinks in the other language, so that

one would have to set as one's task the totality of thought in one language in order to translate from one language into another.

(Bedenken wir nun, wie weit wir noch von diesem Ziel entfernt sind und wie wenig wir darin geleistet haben, die Denkungsweise verschiedener Völker in die unsrige aufzulösen, so sind wird auch noch sehr weit entfernt zu behaupten, daß die Darstellung in irgend einer Sprache so weit gediehen sei, daß andre Denkweisen darin aufgingen. Bei der Uebertragung einer Sprache in die andre treten nun die Differenzen in den Elementen am meisten hervor, so daß die natürliche Aufgabe entsteht, diese durch eine besondere Art der Combination ausgleichen und so den Gehalt ähnlich zu machen, was bis auf einen gewissen Grad sich lösen läßt. Aber die letzte Operation wird dann erst recht approximativ, wenn man in der andern Sprache zugleich denkt, so daß man also die Totalität des Denkens in einer Sprache sich zur Aufgabe machen müßte, um aus einer Sprache in die andre zu übersezen; 1862: 180-81)

Translation brings difference to the fore because it cannot help proceeding from one word to another and inevitably runs into non-synonymy, the irrationality of language. The solution is to shift attention from the individual 'elements' to broader discursive and conceptual issues, as Schleiermacher had indeed recommended in his 1811 notes on dialectics, quoted above: 'I cannot appropriate an alien singularity, I have to reconstruct it through the way the foreign concept is formed' ('Das Einzelne fremde kann ich mir nicht aneignen; aber ich soll es in der fremden Begriffsbildung nachconstruiren'; 2002a, 1: 59). This is a hermeneutic task, which only then truly contributes to the convergence of disparate knowledges when it aspires – a forlorn aspiration – to think the totality of thought in the foreign tongue. While the task cannot be accomplished, it can be done to a degree, and as he states in an 1830 Academy lecture on ethics, cross-border intellectual traffic resembles both the multilingualism of individuals and 'the resulting if never more than approximative appropriation of what has been thought in other languages' ('die daraus entstehende immer nur approximative Aneignung des in fremden Sprachen gedachten'; 2002: 675).

In his dialectics Schleiermacher envisaged a metaphysical ideal of absolute and true knowledge shared by all, and he sketched a dialogical path within and across languages leading, in the fullness of time, to that ultimate consensus. Here translation takes the role of that dialogue. Translation remains mired in difference but it can be lifted to a higher plane. The utopia that translation entertains is that of a final convergence of modes of thinking that would abolish the irrationality of language. It is an almost Benjaminian vision.

Related topics

Benjamin; equivalence; ethics; meaning; Shelley's Plato.

Further Reading

The *Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (KGA), currently in progress, is the authoritative edition of Schleiermacher's works in the original German. Each volume comes with a full critical apparatus, but it will be years before all 65 volumes are available. The best English-language general overview is the *Cambridge Companion to Schleiermacher* (Mariña 2005). It features a chapter on Schleiermacher as a translator of Plato but makes no mention of the 1813 lecture on translation. Andreas Arndt (2013,

in German) and Christian Berner (1995, in French) offer comprehensive accounts of Schleiermacher's philosophical thought; a summary of Arndt's book is available in English (Arndt 2015), while Berner has a useful chapter, in German, on Schleiermacher's philosophy and the 1813 lecture on translation in *Friedrich Schleiermacher and the Question of Translation*, ed. Larisa Cercel and Adriana Șerban (2015).

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