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### Abstract

The activity of translating is as old as the entire history of human civilization. Yet, according to some, it is only in the second half of the twentieth century that translation became the subject of a specific discipline, or, more correctly, that it became the subject of a broad field of interdisciplinary studies, from linguistics to semantics, from literary criticism to comparative literature, and, more recently, even philosophy itself. This is so to the extent that the first scholars of translation in France have even spoken of a *tournant philosophique de la traduction* [philosophical turn of translation].<sup>1</sup> It is natural to look back and attempt to delineate a history of the ideas about translation elaborated in the remote and in the near past once the theme of translation has imposed itself in various ways in the arena of contemporary culture, and therefore to find important precursors and ancestors, even though their contribution was limited often either to fragments or to opinions expressed in the margins of works devoted to other subjects or to comments about their translations.

## Croce, Gentile and Gramsci on Translation

Domenico Jervolino

The activity of translating is as old as the entire history of human civilization. Yet, according to some, it is only in the second half of the twentieth century that translation became the subject of a specific discipline, or, more correctly, that it became the subject of a broad field of interdisciplinary studies, from linguistics to semantics, from literary criticism to comparative literature, and, more recently, even philosophy itself. This is so to the extent that the first scholars of translation in France have even spoken of a *tournant philosophique de la traduction* [philosophical turn of translation].<sup>1</sup> It is natural to look back and attempt to delineate a history of the ideas about translation elaborated in the remote and in the near past once the theme of translation has imposed itself in various ways in the arena of contemporary culture, and therefore to find important precursors and ancestors, even though their contribution was limited often either to fragments or to opinions expressed in the margins of works devoted to other subjects or to comments about their translations.

The beginnings of the history of ideas on translation in Western civilization date at least from the time of the ancient Romans, who were more attentive to the necessity and importance of translating than the Greeks. This history brings us to the early twentieth century, that is, when the subject of translation mentioned above ‘explodes.’ Two main ‘official’ philosophers at that time, the two Dioscuric figures of Italian neo-idealism, Croce and Gentile, deal with the subject of translation in their short writings, though in a significant way. But there is another special philosopher who approaches translation in a very particular way, having become a philosopher in the exceptional context of the academia of political fights and Italian prisons, that is, Antonio Gramsci.

1. According to George Steiner, author of one of the most significant and successful books on translation published in the second half of the Twentieth Century, Croce belongs to that small number of personalities who said something relevant on translation prior to the most recent period.<sup>2</sup> Steiner distinguishes between a first, long period that goes from the Ancients to the early nineteenth century and which is characterized by an empirical approach to the problem of translation, and a second period that goes from Schleiermacher to the first half of the Twentieth Century, where considerations on translation are inserted in a wider context and include ideas on language [*linguaggio*] and on interpretation.

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<sup>1</sup>J.-R. Ladmiral, *Traduire. Théorèmes pour la traduction*. Paris: Gallimard, 1994, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, p.XIII.

<sup>2</sup>George Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992, 2nd edition, p.249.

The theme of the untranslatability of works of art, as readers of Steiner will know since he uses the Italian *intraducibilità*, is what procured Croce a place in the gallery of these famous figures (which constitutes for Steiner the third period). These are the precursors of the current phase of the history of translation. However, the 'untranslatable' is a dialectical element pertaining rightfully to the field of translation theory.

The untranslatability in principle of works of art is a very well known thesis of Croce's *The Aesthetic as the Science of Expression and of the Linguistic in General*, where he develops his conception of art as intuition-expression, that is, as theoretical activity peculiar to the spirit. He distinguishes theoretical from logical activity and, to the extent that intuition-expression constitutes an inferior degree of cognitive activity. He distinguishes it, together with logic, from praxis, which, in turn, articulates itself also as economics and ethics.

Artistic intuition-expression is unrepeatable in its continuously renewed creativity:

Everything that is truly intuition or representation is also expression. That which is not brought before the mind as an object by expression is not intuition or representation, but sensation or something merely natural. The spirit only intuits by making, forming, expressing. Anyone who separates intuition from expression will never be able to put them together again.<sup>3</sup>

Since the aesthetic fact as such exhausts itself entirely in the expressive elaboration of impressions, it does not have anything to do with any practical element. Croce takes this to the extent that even exteriorization of what is perceived by intuition as interior to a work of art subsisting in the material world (picture, statue, etc.) becomes something inessential.

Moreover, expression is not divisible into modes and degrees. Accordingly, the whole traditional patrimony of rhetorical partitions is relegated to the arena of what is worthless under the viewpoint of philosophical aesthetics:

[I]ndividual expressions are so many individuals, no one of which is comparable to any other save in that they all share the property of being expressions. To use the language [*linguaggio*] of the schools, expression is a species that does not act in its turn as a genus. What alters is impressions, the contents of expressions; each content is different from every other, because nothing repeats itself in the flow of life; and to the continual variation of these contents corresponds the irreducible variety of expressive forms, the aesthetic syntheses of impressions.<sup>4</sup>

Croce is inserting as a corollary his thesis on the untranslatability of works of art.

Every translation, in fact, insofar as it attempts to express anew what its singular expression has already found in the original, either creates a diverse work of art or is an imperfect expression of the original, resulting in something without aesthetic value and

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<sup>3</sup>Benedetto Croce, *The Aesthetic as the Science of Expression and of the Linguistic in General*, trans. Colin Lyas, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp.8-9.

<sup>4</sup>Croce, *The Aesthetic*, pp.75-6.

therefore having just the features of a comment, of a paraphrase, with more or less successful approximation of the original.

This thesis is not new. It has famous predecessors. Staying within the Italian literary sphere, it would be enough to recall Dante's *Convivio*. Translation of poetic language [*linguaggio*] shows the limits and difficulties that all the scholars have recognized and they have supplied various responses (still, this has not stopped anyone from translating, even from translating poetic works). Yet, Croce's thesis of the impossibility of translation becomes a necessary element for the coherence of his philosophical system. The activity of translation as an empirical fact and the existence of translations count little in Croce's philosophy which excludes as irrelevant to the aesthetic arena all that is exterior to spiritual intuition-expression:

Every translation, in fact, either diminishes or spoils the original, or the translation creates an entirely new expression by putting the original expression back into the crucible and mixing it with the personal impressions of the one who calls himself the translator. In the former case the expression stays that same as it was originally, the other version being more or less inadequate, that is to say, not properly expression: in the latter case there will indeed be two expressions, but with two different contents. Ugly but faithful, or beautiful but faithless.<sup>5</sup>

The Croce of *The Aesthetic* unfolds his thesis rigorously, attenuating only its most radical consequences when he affirms that: since individuals resembling each other are still different from each other, one may think of establishing in their resemblance the "relative possibility of translations." "What one calls a good translation is an approximation, which has the value of an original work of art and which can stand on its own two feet."<sup>6</sup>

This Crocean framework focuses evidently on the necessity of stressing the uniqueness and singularity of every authentic expression. Croce confirms this assumption in the future. In another of his important texts – *La Poesia* (1936)<sup>7</sup> – Croce, while holding on to the thesis maintained in his previous *The Aesthetic*, simultaneously grants the possibility of translatability under an aesthetic viewpoint without any reserve: "There is no doubt that the sphere in which translation takes place is that of prose expression, which is accomplished with symbols and signs. These signs, not only those used in mathematics, physics, and the other sciences, but also those used in philosophy and history, are interchangeable according to need." Here Croce gives a definition of what translating means and links it clearly to the "equivalence of signs for reciprocal comprehension and

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<sup>5</sup>Croce, *The Aesthetic*, p.76.

<sup>6</sup>Croce, *The Aesthetic*, p.81. Later in the text of *The Aesthetic*, in the chapter on 'physical beauty' of nature and art the verb 'to translate' recurs in a sense which is worthy noticing: 'The complete process of aesthetic production can be symbolized in four stages, which are: *a*, impressions; *b*, expression or aesthetic spiritual synthesis; *c*, the hedonistic accompaniment or pleasure in the beautiful; *d*, translation of the aesthetic object into physical phenomena (sounds, tones, movements, combinations of colours and lines, etc.) Anyone can see that the essence of the matter, the only thing that is properly aesthetic, and therefore real is *b*, which is nothing like any mere natural manifestation or construction which can be metaphorically called 'expression.' (p.107).

<sup>7</sup> Translated into English as Benedetto Croce, *Poetry and Literature*, trans. Giovanni Gullace, Carbondale, Il.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1981.

understanding.” True translation consists, in fact, only in “establishing equivalences among signs.”<sup>8</sup>

Therefore, only prose can be translated. Prose means here, for Croce, what does not pretend to have aesthetic value. That is, “prose which is merely prose” or prose taken according to its ‘prosaism’ but which can have philosophical, scientific, historical or moral goals.<sup>9</sup> When one can draw equivalences among different prosaic expressions considered according to their gnoseological content. This is possible not only between different languages [*lingue*] but also when we relate to ancient forms of our own language, which, in order to be understood, require a sort of translation.

Although, for Croce, poetry is untranslatable, translation becomes necessary within the field of philosophy, of science, of technology, and of everything expressed through prose. Translating is further necessary for pedagogical reasons for anyone who studies the humanities and has not had the possibility or the will to learn the original language [*lingua*] in which the various texts have been written. In this specific case, it is necessary to have recourse to something which approximates true poetry. In some cases, these approximations acquire their own life and importance and turn into real works of art: They are precisely those ‘beautiful unfaithful’ translations which are new works of art.

It is because of the unrepeatable individuality of expression that Croce considers reciting lines of a poem and interpreting theatrical drama as something other than authentic ‘poetry’ that resonates in the soul. In these cases, when the results are aesthetically relevant, a different work of art may come to light whose subjects are the actors, but it is not the author who is being represented or interpreted. Croce’s radicalism is not afraid of creating paradox, if one considers that the words of epic or tragic poetry were designed to be recited, but this would introduce the theme of literary genres and therefore of the different forms of expression, which Croce has already condemned and pushed back to the dominion of exteriority. Moreover, as we know, what counts for Croce is the pure interior word: the external realization of a work in its material form is inessential, even in visual arts. In this way, Croce makes language [*linguaggio*] live in the arena of silence. Croce would be offering a suggestive reduction if he were dealing with a kind of silence from which every word moves away. But instead, this silence is the pure projection of the learned person’s silent reading practice which imposes itself on our literary civilization only at a certain moment (one may recall here Augustine’s observation in his *Confessions* regarding Ambrogio’s silent reading),<sup>10</sup> although it assumes absolute normative value in Crocean idealism.

It is worth noting another instructive Crocean observation, the comment on the statement according to which: “...we never read a poem without translating it into our own language [*linguaggio*]; nor do we understand and speak a foreign language [*lingua*] without by this

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<sup>8</sup>Croce, *Poetry and Literature*, p.114.

<sup>9</sup>Croce, *Poetry and Literature*, p.115.

<sup>10</sup>Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991, pp.92-3.

very act, translating it into our own. But the facts attest to the contrary...”<sup>11</sup> This happens because truly reading or speaking a foreign language implies the revival of its sounds and, within those sounds, of the images and concepts tied to them. To translate, instead, means always to introduce other sounds, other images, and other expressions, in other words, it means to create another language [*linguaggio*]. To translate from one language to another is a metaphorical way of speaking. To translate actually means to include the other’s thought in one’s own. Thanks to translating, understood in this way, one can think the same concept which has been previously thought by Plato or Aristotle: Thus, the present and the past identify each other as “eternal moments in the history of thought.”<sup>12</sup>

Two theses, then, characterize Croce’s position: the first concerns the un-translatability of poetry, and the second concerns the perfect translatability of thought. The latter is less known but almost mirrors the first.

Frankly, I have to say that these two theses are unacceptable: translation that implies the recognition of the otherness and its acceptance by the finitude of another existence is both negated at the level of intuition-expression, in the name of the irreducible otherness of every individuality, and negated at the level of thought to the extent that it is reabsorbed in the unity of the spirit, which identifies every particularity in the eternity of the universal. In a way that could also be suggestive, the double negation makes impossible a translating that operates in the arena of existential contingency. The phantom of perfect identity appears twice and with its paradoxes crushes the constitutive imperfection of translation — the only notion of translation that is truly accessible to humans.

2. Croce’s distinction between poetry and prose — as well as art and philosophy — necessarily lead to Gentile’s criticism of it insofar as it ended up allowing a sort of pacific coexistence between the possibility and impossibility of translation within the Crocean system of the ‘distincts.’ Gentile devotes the article, *Il torto e il diritto delle traduzioni* [*The right and wrong of translations*] (1920), published in the first issue of the new magazine, *Rivista di Cultura*, to the problem of translation. It came out almost twenty years after Croce’s *The Aesthetic* but before Croce’s volume of 1936. By that time, the whole framework of Croce and Gentile’s systems was consolidated so that Gentile’s points of agreement and disagreement are clearly expressed.

Gentile’s thesis stems from the radicalization of the position expressed in Croce’s *The Aesthetic*, according to which not only it is impossible to translate works of art but also scientific and philosophical works, because there is no thought without language [*linguaggio*]: “no thought could be such without being the poetry of the thinker.”<sup>13</sup> Shortly after this, one can find a statement that comes back later in phenomenological writings: language is not an external dress, “it is not the dress but the body of thought.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Croce, *Poetry and Literature*, p.117. [Jervolino notes that Gentile had made this same proposition in 1920, but Croce ignores it here].

<sup>12</sup>Croce, *Poetry and Literature*, p.118.

<sup>13</sup>Reprinted in Giovanni Gentile, *Frammenti di estetica e di letteratura*, Lanciano: Carabba, but the *Avvertenza* is dated 20 November, 1920, see p.369.

<sup>14</sup>Gentile, *Frammenti*, p.370.

Even though Gentile says this referring to philosophical terminology, he also refers to something which has more general value in relation to the whole context of his discussion. Gentile, in fact, quotes Humboldt, for whom language [*lingua*] is not *ergon* but *energeia*, and underlines the extent to which language's concreteness is speaking. Language is not fact (i.e. an object of knowledge of the grammarian and glottologist) but action, like any spiritual form of life. Understood this way, language [*lingua*] is only singular. Therefore one can reach two opposed conclusions, which are like the two sides of a coin: we never translate because the only really existing thing is living language; we always translate because "true language, which resonates in the human soul, is never the same, not even when it occurs in two consecutive instances. It exists on condition that it transforms itself and as something continuously restless and alive."<sup>15</sup>

At this point, Gentile launches into a great apotheosis of translation and stresses something that Steiner would certainly appreciate (indeed, he cites the first line):

Since, to translate is the condition of all thinking and learning... Still, one does not only translate — as it is said empirically speaking and so presupposing different languages [*lingue*] — from foreign into his own language, but one always translates even from his own into his own language; yet, not only from the language of past centuries and from those writers we read, but also from our most recent language... What is translating, concretely and not abstractly, when the translator is present and one can check what he does, if not an interpretation through which one shifts from one language to another because the translator knows both, that is, he has connected both in his spirit, and can shift from one to the other, like shifting from one side to the other of the same language: the one and only language truly existing for him; which is neither the first nor the second, but the ensemble of both in their relation and unity? Whoever translates starts thinking in a way in which the very way he thinks does not represent a stop, but is transformed itself, so that the translator keeps unfolding, clarifying and rendering more intimate and subjective what he started to think about at the beginning. Within this shift from one side to the other of his own thought, within his one and only language, takes place what, empirically speaking, is called translating, which is like shifting from one language to the other. Is not this what happens when we read what has been written in our own language either by someone else or by us?<sup>16</sup>

In this way, the possibility or rather the necessity of translating without distinguishing poetry and prose, art and philosophy, is established. Or, as Gentile himself would rather say, the 'right' of the translator is established. The translator's wrong stems, instead, from the prejudice of considering the work of the spirit like a thing or a fact. We read Dante and Goethe, and make them live again in ourselves. This does not concern the Dante who died in 1321, but the Dante living in us. The same goes for Goethe: the Goethe we read in German is 'our Goethe.'

Gentile's *Philosophy of Art*, the first edition of which dates back to 1931, develops what he had already said in his article of 1920 and proposes again its conclusion: "An Italian reader, too, must translate into his own language (the language he speaks today!) a poem written by another Italian six centuries ago. In addition, each of us must translate for

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<sup>15</sup>Gentile, *Frammenti*, p.373.

<sup>16</sup>Gentile, *Frammenti*, pp.373-4. Regarding Steiner's quotation of Gentile, see Steiner, p. 264.



ourselves the words we wrote yesterday.”<sup>17</sup> This time the controversy with Benedetto Croce is made explicit: Gentile accuses Croce of not having freed himself from “the obsession of an esthetic reality outside the subject, which has been enclosed and sealed in the past.”<sup>18</sup>

As one can see, Croce and Gentile’s solution to the aporia of translation proposes again the fundamental inspiration proper to their philosophical systems: on the one hand, Croce’s ‘philosophy of the distincts,’ on the other, Gentile’s unity of spiritual act. This confirms the theoretical relevance of the question of translation has for both, despite its apparent marginality.

Particularly regarding Gentile’s solution, one can say that while attempting to provide the foundation for human translating activity, it ends up dissolving more than resolving this problem. The diversity of languages about which Humboldt was meditating is precisely what is lost in the Eraclitean flow of unique spiritual life. In this way, Gentile’s acquisition, which is implicit in the notion of language as the body of thought, is neutralized. The life Gentile evokes is more than human, and at the end it risks vanishing if it does not become even inhuman. Concrete life, in fact, is not only made of inextinguishable and multiform vivacity, it is also characterized by passivity, heaviness, opaqueness and repetition. Nonetheless, Gentile grasps something real, even though it is dressed in speculative wraps of actual idealism.

Once again, the discoveries as well as the aporias and confusions of idealistic thought must be overturned in order to bring the dialectical movement back to the concreteness of the human condition.

3. One can look for this overturning precisely in Gramsci’s thought. In Gramsci’s case as well, scholars have only recently clearly grasped the importance of the subject of translation.<sup>19</sup> This appears now one of the most original motifs of his reflections and one of the reasons for his new relevance beyond the stereotypes which have obscured him as a thinker for a long time. He is much richer than the icon, though honored, that a certain tradition has transmitted to us.

Gramsci was formed as a linguist in the school of Bartoli (who hoped that Gramsci would pursue a brilliant career as a scholar of the new linguistic science emerging at the beginnings of the Twentieth Century). He was an attentive and acute reader, though irregular because of his anomalous position – or, one should say, because he lacked a place in the world of intellectuals, of the varied and uneasy culture of his time, and particularly of the great Italian philosophy of the early Twentieth Century. In his

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<sup>17</sup> Giovanni Gentile, *The Philosophy of Art*, trans. and ed. by Giovanni Gullace (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), pp. 217, translation altered.

<sup>18</sup>Gentile, *The Philosophy of Art*, p. 217, n.2. Translation altered.

<sup>19</sup>See André Tosel, *Marx en italiques. Aux sources de la philosophie italienne contemporaine*, Mauvezin: Trans Europe Repress, 1991. See also the more recent Giorgio Baratta, *Le rose e i quaderni*, Rome: Gamberetti, 2000, and Fabio Frosini, *Gramsci e la filosofia*, Rome: Carocci, 2003, pp. 98-102. On Gramsci and philosophy of language one cannot forget the study by Franco Lo Piparo, *Lingua intellettuale egemonia in Gramsci*, Bari: Laterza, 1979.

necessarily fragmented and unfinished work, Gramsci elaborates an original recovery of Marxism, which he frees from naturalistic and economistic dogmatism, and places again in the grand currents of historical life and struggle for the problematic, very difficult, though irrevocable, process of human liberation.

In this context, Gramsci is not just using the phrase the ‘philosophy of praxis’ simply due to the caution of a prisoner [worried about fascist censors]. It has, instead, a peculiar theoretical meaning as documented by detailed philological inquiries. Praxis is the truth of Marx and Marxism. Marx’s thought is philosophy even though it breaks radically from past philosophy. It is not mere methodology. Regarding this point Gentile was right with respect to Croce’s position. One should not forget, in fact, that whereas Gramsci has debts towards neo-idealistic philosophy, the latter, in turn, especially with reference to its main representatives’ juvenile exordium, confronted Marx and had also its theoretical debts towards his thought.

Now, there is a very strict tie between praxis and translation as Gramsci conceives it. He seems to overlook the Crocean question about the translation of works of art and also that of inter-linguistic translation (to use Jacobson’s terminology), even though one should not forget that some of his *Prison Notebooks* were devoted to translation exercises.

However, Gramsci deals with this problem at a different level, that of the ‘translatability’ of languages [*linguaggi*]. He deals not much with historically defined languages [*lingue*], but rather with those linguistic-cultural ensembles proper to specific disciplines, to world-views, and to particular cognitive universes. In this way, he recovers a problem which in the Marxist tradition corresponds to that of the so-called ‘superstructures.’ The theme of superstructures had been central to Italian Marxism and to the impact it had on the new generation of bourgeois intellectuals at the end of the nineteenth century. Gramsci’s position is not that of the impossibility of translating (poetry) but that “we always translate, when we talk, when we think” (and that for Croce is limited to philosophy and for Gentile is extended to all of spiritual life). Still, the key of this universal interpreting-translating is not and cannot any longer be, for Gramsci, the philosophy of the spirit or of the act through which the spirit eternally recreates itself, but the new philosophy of praxis. All the secrets of cultural production are in historical and social praxis, and the Marxian philosophy of praxis is the one which knows how to read its own historical truth.

In this way, Gramsci goes beyond Croce and Gentile and gets close to that rediscovery of hermeneutics realized in the 1920s in the arena of existentialist philosophies. This also could have been absorbed by Russian revolutionary Marxism had it paid attention to the cultural vanguards which sided with the Revolution. But instead Marxism closed itself by accepting a sort of naturalistic and positivistic dogmatism that rejected, was suspicious of and even persecuted these cultural movements including eliminating them physically during Stalin’s period.

Concerning the philosophical field, I am thinking of the promising phenomenological school of Moscow, revolving around the activity of the young Professor Gustav Špet,

among whose young disciples were Roman Jakobson and Boris Pasternak.<sup>20</sup> I also have in mind the experience of literary and artistic vanguards' activity taking place in those years.

About all this, Gramsci, who was a detainee in fascist prisons, could know little or nothing. It is therefore extraordinary that he discovered hermeneutics, in his own original way, through overturning neo-idealistic Italian philosophy. Gramsci had a first hand knowledge of contemporary studies on language, which dates back to when he was a university student. This was around the eve of the linguistic turn of twentieth century philosophy, which fully came to be during Gramsci's incarceration, and lasted throughout much of the century.

The hints one can find in Gramsci's work of Bréal, Vailati, Russell, and Peano (the latter was teaching in Turin while Gramsci was university student there) have all the vivacity and fascination of a period in which — so to say — the game was not over yet.

Gramsci conceives language [*linguaggio*] in a very broad sense, which becomes fundamental to his conception of history:

It seems that one can say 'language' is essentially a collective term which does not presuppose any 'unique' thing neither in time nor in space. Language also means (even though at the level of common sense) culture and philosophy ... it may be said that every speaking being has her own personal language, at the least, i.e. her own way to think and feel.<sup>21</sup>

Thus, translatability of languages means capability of establishing networks of connections and comprehension's relationships between different cultures. Therefore, to know or not to know how to translate becomes decisive for the new type of intellectual promoted by Gramsci. It is no surprise that he tends to affirm — even if mitigated with a cautionary 'it seems' — that the primary or specific task of the philosophy of praxis is the accomplishment of the translatability of languages:

The following problem must be resolved: whether the reciprocal translatability of the various philosophical and scientific languages is a 'critical' element that belongs to every conception of the world or whether it belongs (in an organic way) only to the philosophy of praxis, being appropriable only in part by other philosophies? [...] It seems that one may in fact say that only in the philosophy of praxis is the 'translation' organic and thoroughgoing, whilst from other standpoints it is often a simple game of generic 'schematisms.'"<sup>22</sup>

However, this function of universal 'translator' is, for Gramsci, historically determined. The philosophy of praxis is historical itself and therefore destined to be overcome, whereas — as Gramsci himself explicates — some aspects of idealistic philosophies currently criticized could reveal their validity in the future, i.e., in a society different from

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<sup>20</sup>On this specific point I refer back to my article, "Phénoménologie herméneutique et marxisme critique," *Actuel Marx* 25 (1999), pp.57-67.

<sup>21</sup>Antonio Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*. 4 vols., ed. Gerratana, Turin: Einaudi, 1975, p.1330. Q10§44, p. 1330. English translation in Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, New York: International Publishers, 1971, pp.348-9.

<sup>22</sup>Gramsci, p.1468, Q11§47. For translation see Antonio Gramsci, *Further Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, trans. Derek Boothman, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995, p. 307.

the present one. In any case, we cannot forget the precarious and provisional character of Gramsci's research, precisely because of the precarious and painful living conditions in which he unfolded it. What one has to keep of Gramsci's research is, above all, the fruitful idea of a translatability that has to be pursued on the dangerous and difficult terrain of a praxis engaged in the construction of inter-human community worth its name, without any assurance of success.

This idea, in its various forms dialectically connected to the idealist heritage, although it needs indeed to be translated again and again because of the finitude of existence, still remains for us a theoretical subject worthy of thinking about and an ethical-practical task in the 'great and terrible' world in which we happen to live and work.



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