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The article discusses the common philosophical views that Mikhail Bakhtin and J. Ortega y Gasset had on language and culture, with a special view on translation. The lack of attention to this topic is surprising given their similar concerns with communication, broadly defined. It is argued that Mikhail Bakhtin's and J. Ortega y Gasset's philosophical ideas on communication are significant for translation theory. Their ideas are presented as having paved the way for a paradigmatic shift in the conceptualizations of the nature of translation. Specifically, their views helped to introduce the so-called Romantic paradigm, calling for dialogic relationship between languages and cultures.

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M. BAKHTIN AND J. ORTEGA Y GASSET: NOSTRADAD AND BEYOND¹

The influence of the individual ideas of Mikhail Bakhtin and J. Ortega y Gasset on many fields, including linguistics, philosophy, sociology, literary criticism, cultural studies, education, etc., can not be overestimated and is well-documented (Renfrew 2009; Morson & Emerson 1989). However, the two thinkers have on very few occasions been brought together, for example, due to their common influence by the ideas of Einstein's Relativity Theory (Almería 1993) or through their common contact with intermediary figures such as Georg Lukács (Prosenč Segula 2004). This lack of attention is surprising given their similar philosophical views and concerns dealing with language and communication, broadly defined. Our article aims to remedy this situation, looking at common themes between two thinkers, with a special view on translation.

Mikhail Bakhtin and J. Ortega y Gasset's common conceptual roots can be understood in the context of their similar influences and life experiences (Pozuelo Yvancos 1992; Beltrán Almería 1993; and Abad Nebot 1995). Ideologically, the ideas of both thinkers can be traced back first of all to German Hermeneutics (Lopez 2006) and German Linguistics with a hermeneutic slant (Vossler and Spitzer). In philosophical terms their ideas are said to have been influenced by Kantian idealism and neo-Kantianism and *Lebensphilosophie*. It is due to these influences that Mikhail Bakhtin and J. Ortega y Gasset's interest in such concepts as Self and Other (subjective, lived), experience and (objective, socially regulated) form, can be explained. Also, Mikhail Bakhtin and J. Ortega y Gasset came to realize why the situation whereby form dominates experience is viewed as a kind of tyranny – the situation with which both thinkers were familiar first-hand. It is well-known that both thinkers lived through some of the darkest moments of the 20th century, e. g. Bakhtin through Stalin's regime while J. Ortega y Gasset through Miguel Primo de Rivera's dictatorship (1923-

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1930). It is not surprising, therefore, that both thinkers acutely felt the concern for the promotion of openness to multiplicity of perspective, which later on manifested in many of their most important works.

We begin by discussing the philosophical assumptions behind their works that shaped up the two thinkers' views on language and translation. Usually a given thinker has maintained a single, general philosophy with regard to which the rest of the topics s/he considers are consistent. Now, when it is the case that a given thinker has maintained two or more different philosophies in the course of his/her life, his/her theories of language and subsequent theories of translation are different, as well; for example, this is paradigmatically the case of L. Wittgenstein, where one can find two different theories of translation depending on whether one considers the picture theory of language, expounded in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, or the language-game theory, in his *Philosophical Investigations* (Chamizo Domínguez 1987).

With regard to J. Ortega y Gasset's philosophical thought three different stages have been suggested (Ferrater Mora 1957; Chamizo Domínguez 2002), namely, objectivism, perspectivism, and ratio-vitalism. It should be stressed that the second stage does not annihilate the first one, not the third stage annihilates the previous two. But, conversely to Wittgenstein, who explicitly rejected the picture theory of language in his *Philosophical Investigations* and wrote that "it is interesting to compare the multiplicity of the tools in language and of the way they are used, the multiplicity of kinds of word and sentence, with what logicians have said about the structure of language. Including the author of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*" (Wittgenstein 1984: I, 23), it should be stressed that J. Ortega y Gasset's perspectivism subsumes his objectivism and, in turn, his ratio-vitalism subsumes both previous stages. Consequently, perspectivism becomes the core of his philosophical development and the philosophical position from where both language and translation are understood.

Negatively considered perspectivism consists in the rejection of both relativism and skepticism, which maintain that '*La verdad, pues, no existe: no hay más que verdades 'relativas' a la condición de cada sujeto. Tal es la doctrina 'relativista'*' "The' truth, then, does not exist: there are only truths which are 'relative' to the condition of each subject. Such is the 'relativistic' doctrine" (Ortega y Gasset, EL TEMA DE

NUUESTRO TIEMPO, III: 157. Original single quotation marks),¹ and rationalism, which claims that *Siendo la verdad una, absoluta e invariable, no puede ser atribuida a nuestras personas individuales, corruptibles y mudadizas. Habrá que suponer, más allá de las diferencias que entre los hombres existen, una especie de sujeto abstracto, común al europeo y al chino, al contemporáneo de Pericles y al caballero de Luis XIV. Descartes llamó a ese nuestro fondo común, exento de variaciones y peculiaridades individuales, 'la razón', y Kant, 'el ente racional'*" "Since truth is unitary, absolute and invariable, it cannot be attributed to us who are corruptible and variable individuals. Moving beyond the differences that exist amongst persons, one must suppose some sort of abstract subject which is shared by Europeans and Chinese, by contemporaries of Pericles and the nobility of Louis XIV. Descartes called this common basis, free of variations and individual peculiarities, 'reason', which later was termed 'rational being' by Kant" (Ortega y Gasset, EL TEMA DE NUESTRO TIEMPO, III: 158. Original single quotation marks). Positively considered, perspectivism claims that reality has no unique aspect, but many sides which can be seen by different individuals: *La realidad, pues, se ofrece en perspectivas individuales. Lo que para uno está en último plano, se halla para otro en primer término. El paisaje ordena sus tamaños y sus distancias de acuerdo con nuestra retina, y nuestro corazón comparte los acentos. La perspectiva visual y la intelectual se complican con la perspectiva de la valoración. En vez de disputar, integremos nuestras visiones en generosa colaboración espiritual, y como las riberas independientes se aúnan en la gruesa vena del río, compongamos el torrente de lo real* "Reality, then, is presented in individual perspectives. What is background for one person, is foreground for another. The sizes and distances of a landscape are determined by our retinas, and our hearts provide the accents. Both visual and conceptual perspectives are affected by our assessments. Instead of arguing, let us integrate our views in a generous spiritual collaboration, and thus, just as the opposite banks of a river are joined by its broad current, let us unite in the flow of what joins us" (Ortega y Gasset, VERDAD Y PERSPEC-

¹ We quote J. Ortega y Gasset's writings according to (Ortega y Gasset 1983). We firstly provide in each quote the work we refer to, secondly (in Roman numerals) we refer to the volume, and finally (in Arabic numerals) we refer to the page or pages of each volume.

TIVA, II: 19), and, consequently, *La verdad, lo real, el universo, la vida – como queráis llamarlo—, se quiebra en facetas innumerables, en vertientes sin cuento, cada una de las cuales da hacia un individuo. Si éste ha sabido ser fiel a su punto de vista, si ha resistido a la eterna seducción de cambiar su retina por otra imaginaria, lo que ve será un aspecto real del mundo* “The true, the real, the universe, the life – whatever name you wish to give it— is subdivided into innumerable facets, into countless aspects, each one of which is relative to an individual. If one knows how to be faithful to that particular viewpoint, resisting the eternal temptation to exchange one’s eyes for other imaginary ones, then what s/he sees will be a genuine view of the world” (Ortega y Gasset, VERDAD Y PERSPECTIVA, II: 19). This means that, in a similar way to H. Putnam’s criticism of the “objectivity for us, even if it not the metaphysical objectivity of the God’s Eye view” (Putnam 1981: 55. Original emphasis), J. Ortega y Gasset criticized as well what he called “the vision of things *sub specie aeternitatis*” since only an individual viewpoint can achieve some truth: *El individuo, para conquistar el máximo posible de verdad no deberá, como durante centurias se le ha predicado, suplantar su espontáneo punto de vista por otro ejemplar y normativo, que solía llamarse ‘visión de las cosas sub specie aeternitatis’. El punto de vista de la eternidad es ciego, no ve nada, no existe. En vez de esto, procurará ser fiel al imperativo unipersonal que representa su individualidad* “Contrary to what has been proclaimed for centuries, in order to attain the maximum possible truth the individual must not replace his/her spontaneous viewpoint by another that is exemplary and normative – the so-called ‘view of things *sub specie aeternitatis*’. The eternal viewpoint is blind; it sees nothing, it does not even exist. Rather, one must try to be faithful to the unipersonal imperative that represents one’s individuality” (Ortega y Gasset, *El tema de nuestro tiempo*, III: 237. Original italics and single quotation marks). In short, according to this, probably the most famous text of J. Ortega y Gasset, perspectivism consists in the fact that *Mi salida natural hacia el universo se abre por los puertos del Guadarrama o el campo de Ontígola. Este sector de realidad circunstancial forma la otra mitad de mi persona: sólo al través de él puedo integrarme y ser plenamente yo mismo (...). Yo soy yo y mi circunstancia, y si no la salvo a ella no me salvo yo. Benefac loco illi quo natus es, leemos en la Biblia. Y en la escuela platónica se nos da como empresa de toda cultura, ésta: ‘salvar las apariencias’, los fenómenos. Es decir, buscar el sentido de lo que nos*

rodea “My natural opening toward the universe is through the mountain passes of the Guadarrama or the countryside of Ontigola. This sector of circumstantial reality forms the other half of my person; only through it can I be integrated and be fully myself (...) I am myself plus my circumstance, and if I do not save it, I cannot save myself. *Benefac loco illi quo natus es*, as we read in the Bible. And in the Platonic school the task of all culture is given as ‘to save the appearances’, the phenomena; that is to say, to look for the meaning of what surrounds us” (Ortega y Gasset, *MEDITACIONES DEL ‘QUIJOTE’*, I: 322. Original italics and single quotation marks).

And, what is said about individuals can be said about cultures, as well, since any culture entails a given perspective of the world, and each of them equally is justified: *Lo propio acontece con los pueblos. En lugar de tener por bárbaras las culturas no europeas, empezaremos a respetarlas como estilos de enfrentamiento con el cosmos equivalentes al nuestro. Hay una perspectiva china tan justificada como la perspectiva occidental* “The same point can be made in regard to the differences among peoples. Rather than regarding non-European cultures as barbarous, we will begin to respect them as being various ways, parallel to our own, of interpreting the cosmos. The Chinese and Western perspectives are equally justified” (Ortega y Gasset, *EL TEMA DE NUESTRO TIEMPO*, III: 237). So, J. Ortega y Gasset definitively abandons the classical European concept of culture as “enlightenment and excellence of taste acquired by intellectual and aesthetic training” and/or “acquaintance with and taste in fine arts, humanities, and broad aspects of science as distinguished from vocational and technical skills” (Merriam-Webster) and embraces the modern concept of culture which dates back to German romanticism and is usually assumed in the 20th and 21st centuries. The latter is defined by the Merriam-Webster itself as “the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group; also: the characteristic features of everyday existence (as diversions or a way of life) shared by people in a place or time <popular culture> <southern culture>” (original emphasis).¹ And, if the classical concept of culture became defi-

¹ Note that, in spite of the fact that this second concept of culture is the most usual one nowadays, the early concept of culture remains workable, particularly in the adjective *cultured*, which is synonymous with *cultivated*, *refined*, *sophisticated*, *civilized*, or *educated*, but not with *social*, *folk*, *racial*, *ethnic*, or *religious*.

cient because it established an axiological order among cultures and, needless to say, this concept of culture considered the western culture as preferable with regard to any other culture, the new concept of culture – since it assumes that there is no axiological preference among cultures – entails, as a last resort, the thesis of the incommensurability of cultures.

Similar to J. Ortega y Gasset's ideas, M. Bakhtin's dialogic philosophy was developed vis-a-vis the view of communication as a linear process of information transfer between a sender and a receiver. Instead, in M. Bakhtin's view, meaning in communication constantly emerges at the boundaries of consciousness between two people, with signs used in this process are socially determined and infused multiple voices. Such view took shape in M. Bakhtin's *TOWARD A PHILOSOPHY OF THE ACT* (1993) where he discusses the ethical nature of meaning construction, rejecting the traditional "theoreticism", i. e., construction of universal propositions and laws, and sees each act as a performed deed within its unique, concrete context (1993: 22-28). M. Bakhtin's position emphasizes relativity, not relativism (Holquist 1990: 20-23; Morson and Emerson 1990: 26), as he claims that each "I" who performs an act holds a unique place within the architectonic whole of Being (Bakhtin 1993: 40-41, 53-54). As a result, because of the uniqueness to be achieved, every agent of communications must actualize his/her uniqueness, joining in the process with the uniqueness of an actual, once-occurrent, and never-repeatable whole (Bakhtin 1993: 37-40).

This ethical imperative remains implicit in M. Bakhtin's later works on communication and helps to explain the persistent theme of unity amid differences in contemporary appropriations of Bakhtin. In M. Bakhtin's study of communications one can feel the strong sense of socio-cultural context. Within each context a unique act of joining with the whole is presented as an act of communication. M. Bakhtin makes this point very clearly in *TOWARD A REWORKING OF THE DOSTOEVSKY BOOK*, cf.: "To be means to communicate" (Bakhtin 1984: 287).

Thus, just as J. Ortega y Gasset, M. Bakhtin had rejected abstract and disembodied thinking in favor of a contextual understanding of the word. Specifically, M. Bakhtin proposes to study communication not in terms of decontextualized abstract structural codes, but in terms of utterances situated within the live context of their dialogic interrelations with other utterances. Each utterance correlates with "the extraverbal context of reality (situation, setting, prehistory)" and

with the utterances of other speakers (Bakhtin 1986: 73). It is important to emphasize that, according to M. Bakhtin, utterances in their dialogic interrelations refer not only to individual language utterances, but also whole cultures (Emerson 1996: 109-14; Morson and Emerson 1990: 54-56). Echoing the ideas of G. H. Mead and other thinkers within the symbolic interactionism school, M. Bakhtin writes that "In the realm of culture, outsidership is a most powerful factor in understanding. It is only in the eyes of another culture that foreign culture reveals itself fully and profoundly" (1986b: 7). These dialogic interrelations take place on the boundaries between cultures and are the sites of "the most intense and productive life of culture" (2).

As we can see, in their philosophical view of the world both M. Bakhtin and J. Ortega y Gasset show a common concern for multi-voicedness in their conceptions of the nature of discursive interactions. This concern is especially evident in their works on language. As shown earlier, M. Bakhtin was against reducing language to an abstract system of signs, separate from the live context of social Communications; instead, he emphasized the critical and dialogical nature of language, captured in his concept of "meta-linguistics" that takes language beyond the limits of linguistics. The main assumption of meta-linguistics is the dialogical account of language according to which "the task of understanding does not basically amount to recognizing the form used, but rather to understanding it in a particular, concrete context, to understanding its meaning in a particular utterance, i. e., it amounts to understanding its novelty and not to recognizing its identity" (Voloshinov 1973: 68). For M. Bakhtin all language is dialogic, i. e., it has social and ideological dimensions with every word capable of "internal dialogisation". As a result of such "internal dialogisation", every text is polyphonic, i. e., it contains multiple voices (Bakhtin 1981).

In the case of J. Ortega y Gasset we find many similar views on the nature of language. The young J. Ortega y Gasset even planned to devote his life professionally to the study of language (Araya 1971: 196-199). This goal was not realized and, instead of a linguist he became a leading figure in philosophy. However he never forgot this early vocation and reflection on language is an essential facet of his philosophy. J. Ortega y Gasset's main theses on language are the following: 1) every language involves a given perspective on the world, and language itself is both an element and a doctrine; 2) meaning depends on circumstances and occasions; 3) meaning is inseparable from the speakers'

perspectives and intentions; and 4) given that what is said is occasional, the meaning of what is said has to be understood by taking into account what is hidden under it. Let's look at these four ideas one by one, using J. Ortega y Gasset's original texts.

First, echoing W. von Humboldt's ideas on the connection between language and culture and prefiguring Benjamin L. Whorf's ideas on the connection between ontology and language, J. Ortega y Gasset's reflection on language starts from the conviction that one's mother tongue is the radical circumstance that conditions our perspective of reality, since everyone has been minted by it: *La lengua materna le ha acuñado (al individuo) para siempre. Y como cada lengua lleva en sí una figura peculiar del mundo, le impone, junto a ciertas potencialidades afortunadas, toda una serie de radicales limitaciones. Aquí vemos con toda transparencia cómo lo que llamamos el hombre es una acentuada abstracción. El ser más íntimo de cada hombre está ya informado, modelado por una determinada sociedad* "(The individual's) mother tongue is a permanent personal imprint. Therefore, since each language encapsulates a particular image of the world, it imposes a series of radical restrictions together with some fortunate possibilities. Here we can clearly see how what is called 'the individual' is an accentuated abstraction. Each person's innermost being is already being informed, already being modeled by a given society" (Ortega y Gasset, *EL HOMBRE Y LA GENTE*, VII: 254). As a result of this, language can be considered as an *elemento de gestos y de palabras en medio de las cuales se halla sumergido (el hombre). No es arbitrario llamarla 'elemento' porque posee buen derecho a ser adjuntado a los cuatro tradicionales. Pues bien, todos los demás 'mundos' que pueda haber, desde el físico hasta el de los Dioses, son descubiertos por el hombre mirándolos al trasluz de un enrejado de gestos y palabras humanos* "element of gestures and words wherein man is immersed. It is not misleading thus to term it an 'element', since it deserves to be grouped with the traditional four. Thereupon, any further 'worlds' that there might be, from the physical to the divine, are to be discovered by one's looking at them through a latticework of human gestures and words" (Ortega y Gasset, *PRÓLOGO A 'TEORÍA DE LA EXPRESIÓN', POR KARL BÜHLER*, VII: 35-36). Accordingly, just as man needs the other four elements in order to grow physically, man also needs language in order to grow as a human being, since *en el humus se sedimenta su herencia biológica, en el verbum está encerrada la otra herencia cultural* "(man's) biological heritage is deposited

in the *humus*, whilst (man's) further cultural heritage is contained in the *verbum*" (Cerezo Galán 1984: 383. Original italics).

Second, echoing F. de Saussure¹ and prefiguring L. Wittgenstein's theory of meaning as use,² J. Ortega y Gasset will establish that the meaning of a given term is not something which is untemporal and given for always, but something that depends on the circumstances or, as stated in an up-to-date jargon, depending on the context: "*El significado real de cada vocablo es el que tiene cuando es dicho, cuando funciona en la acción humana que es decir, y depende, por tanto, de quién lo dice y a quién se dice, y cuándo y dónde se dice. Lo cual equivale a advertir que el significado auténtico de una palabra depende, como todo lo humano, de las circunstancias. (...) El sentido real de una palabra no es el que tiene en el Diccionario, sino el que tiene en el instante. ¡Tras veinticinco siglos de adiestrarnos la mente para contemplar la realidad sub specie aeternitatis, tenemos que comenzar de nuevo y forjarnos una técnica intelectual que nos permita verla sub specie instantis!*" – "The actual meaning of each word is what it expresses when it is spoken, when it functions within the human action of speaking; and consequently it depends upon who says it and to whom it is said, as well as upon when and where it is said. This is simply equivalent to noting that the genuine meaning of a given word depends, like everything human, on the circumstances.... The actual sense of a word is not merely the one listed in the dictionary, but rather the one it has in the instant. After twenty-five centuries of training our minds to contemplate reality sub specie aeternitatis, we must begin to forge an intellectual technique that allows us to see it *sub specie instantis!*" (Ortega y Gasset, HISTORIA COMO SISTEMA Y DEL IMPERIO ROMANO, VI: 55. Original

¹ "Now linguistic identity is not the kind of identity the suit has, but the kind of identity the train and the street have. Every time I utter the word *Messieurs!* ('Gentlemen'), I renew its material being: it is a new act of phonation and a new psychological act. The link between two uses of the same word is not based upon material identity, nor upon exact similarity of meaning, but upon factors the linguist must discover, if he is to come anywhere near to revealing the true nature of linguistic units" (Saussure 1986: 152. Original italics).

² "For a *large* class of cases – though not for all – in which employ the word 'meaning' it can be defined thus: the meaning of a word is its use in the language. And the *meaning* of a name is sometimes explained by pointing to its *bearer*" (Wittgenstein 1984: I, 43. Original emphasis).

italics). The fact that the meaning of a word is not something that is given for always, but something that continuously changes depending on different contexts and circumstances introduces the diachronic factor and leads J. Ortega y Gasset to consider language as something that is continuously making itself instead of something that is definitively done.

Third, if, as it has been previously stated, the meaning of a word depends on the circumstances, it follows that *“las palabras no son palabras sino cuando son dichas por alguien a alguien. Sólo así, funcionando como concreta acción, como acción viviente de un ser humano sobre otro ser humano, tiene realidad verbal. Y como los hombres entre quienes las palabras se cruzan son vidas humanas y toda vida se halla en todo instante en una determinada circunstancia o situación, es evidente que la realidad ‘palabra’ es inseparable de quien la dice, de a quien va dicha y de la situación en que esto acontece”* – “Words are not words except when they are spoken by a human being to another human being. Only thus, functioning in concrete action as a living activity expressed from one person to another, do they have verbal reality. And just as those individuals are human lives between whom words are exchanged, and all life is in every instant within a specific circumstance or situation, it is evident that the ‘real’ word is inseparable from who expresses it, to whom it is expressed, and the situation in which this occurs” (Ortega y Gasset, *EL HOMBRE Y LA GENTE*, VII: 242). This general reflection on language, that evokes B. Russell’s notion of “knowledge by familiarity” and prefigures H. P. Grice’s notion of “speaker’s meaning” and probably goes beyond both from a philosophical viewpoint, entails that only when an adequate acquaintance among speakers is given the meaning of a word can be understood. For such a reason, when writer and reader have no acquaintance between them, then words lose their authentic meanings. This entails two relevant consequences. On the one hand, men actually are able to communicate their thoughts only through dialog, since *“en rigor, no hay más argumentos que los de hombre a hombre. Porque, viceversa, una idea es siempre un poco estúpida si el que la dice no cuenta al decirla con quién es aquel a quien se dice. Es decir, el lógos es, en su estricta realidad, humanísima conversación, diálogos (...), argumentum hominis ad hominem. El diálogo es el logos desde el punto de vista del otro, del prójimo”* – “strictly speaking, there are no meanings other than those communicated from one man to another.

An idea is inevitably somewhat confused if the person who expresses it does not take into account to *whom* it is being spoken. That is to say, the *logos* is, in its essence, human conversation, *dialogos*, (...) *argumentum hominis ad hominem*. Dialog is the *logos* from the viewpoint of the *other*, the fellow man” (Ortega y Gasset, *PRÓLOGO PARA ALEMANES*, VIII: 17. Original emphasis). And, on the other hand, when the reader does not know the writer and consequently is not fit to engage in dialog with them, some introduction is needed in order to avoid errors, misunderstandings, and understatements. Therefore, a work can be correctly understood only when the reader knows the writer and, vice versa, when the writer knows for whom s/he is writing. Given that J. Ortega y Gasset mainly wrote taking into account his Spanish readers, he was obliged to introduce himself and his work when it was translated into German: “*Yo hablaba a Juan, contando con Juan y contando con que Juan sabe quién le habla, y he aquí que, de pronto, me escamotean a Juan y me encuentro diciendo lo mismo a Pedro, con el que yo apenas contaba y del que estoy seguro que no me conoce. He aquí anulado mi propósito: heme aquí en la situación que más detesto: ‘No se sabe quién’ hablando a ‘no se sabe quién’. Estamos en plena abstracción*” – “I am speaking to John, relating specifically to John and assuming that John knows who is talking to him— and behold, suddenly John is gone and I find myself *saying the same thing* to Peter, of whom I was not thinking and who I’m sure doesn’t even know me. Here my purpose is utterly thwarted; I find myself in the situation which I most dislike: an unknown speaking to an unknown. We are in complete abstraction from reality” (Ortega y Gasset, *PRÓLOGO PARA ALEMANES*, VIII: 18-19. Original italics).

Fourth, if the meaning is occasional, speech itself is, paradoxically, both deficient and exuberant according to the two hermeneutic “laws” that J. Ortega y Gasset suggests in two different places (Ortega y Gasset, *INTRODUCCIÓN A VELÁZQUEZ*, VIII: 493; and *COMENTARIO AL ‘BANQUETE’ DE PLATÓN*, IX: 751). Speech is deficient because we “*nunca llegamos a decir plenamente lo que nos proponemos decir*” – “we never fully attain saying what we intend to say” (Ortega y Gasset, *INTRODUCCIÓN A VELÁZQUEZ*, VIII: 493), but it is exaggerated as well because “*nuestro decir manifiesta siempre muchas más cosas de las que nos proponemos e incluso no pocas que queremos silenciar*” – “our speaking always reveals much more than we ourselves intend, and even much about which we wish to keep silent” (Ortega y Gasset, *INTRODUCCIÓN A*

VELÁZQUEZ, VIII: 493). And, what happens with regard to speech also happens with regard to different languages.

It is clear that, to both M. Bakhtin and J. Ortega y Gasset, no language can fully express any meaning because there is always something beyond it, with which every word (and every culture) inevitably engages in dialogic relations. Thus, every act of communication (as a meta-linguistic act) can, and must, be viewed as an act of translation.

It must be noted that “nowhere does Bakhtin offer us a theory of translation” (Emerson 1984: xxxi). However, we must consider their views on language as assumptions that shed light on translation theory because “a translation theory always rests on particular assumptions about language use, even if they are no more than fragmentary hypotheses that remain implicit or unacknowledged” (Venuti 2000: 5). In the case of M. Bakhtin his concept of meta-linguistics forms the background for such assumptions (cf. Kumar and Malshe 2005). In the case of J. Ortega y Gasset, such assumptions can be drawn from his seminal essay “MISERIA Y ESPLENDOR DE LA TRADUCCIÓN”, first published as newspaper articles in LA NACIÓN (Buenos Aires) during May-June 1937. The essay reproduces an imaginary dialog on the topic of translation between J. Ortega y Gasset himself and several French scholars.

J. Ortega y Gasset starts his essay by claiming that translation is a utopian work, since, after all, the translator is trying to say in a language what this language does not allow to be said. This starting point is coherent with his thesis that every language involves a given set of doctrines and perspectives of the world. However, even though every language involves a given set of doctrines and perspectives of the world, “*al hablar o escribir renunciamos a decir muchas cosas porque la lengua no nos lo permite*” – “when speaking or writing we refrain constantly from saying many things because language doesn’t allow them to be said” (Ortega y Gasset, MISERIA Y ESPLENDOR DE LA TRADUCCIÓN, V: 443. Original italics)¹ and “*cada pueblo calla unas cosas para poder decir otras. Porque todo sería indecible*” – “all peoples silence some things *in order* to be able to say others. Otherwise, *everything* would be unsayable” (Ortega y Gasset, MISERIA Y ESPLENDOR DE LA TRADUCCIÓN, V: 444. Original italics). The result is the misery of translation, since

¹ We quote the English version of THE MISERY AND THE SPLENDOR OF TRANSLATION according to the translation provided by Elisabeth Gamble Miller (J. Ortega y Gasset, 2003).

“en ella se trata de decir en un idioma lo que este idioma tiende a silenciar” – “in it one tries to say in a language precisely what that language tends to silence” (Ortega y Gasset, MISERIA Y ESPLENDOR DE LA TRADUCCIÓN, V: 444). Conversely, this apparent handicap is what makes the splendor of translation: the fact that it consists in “la revelación de los secretos mutuos los pueblos y épocas se guardan recíprocamente y tanto contribuyen a su dispersión y hostilidad; en suma, una audaz integración de la Humanidad” – “in it one tries to say in a language precisely what that language tends to silence. But, at the same time, one glimpses a possible marvelous aspect of the enterprise of translating: the revelation of the mutual secrets that peoples and epochs keep reciprocally to themselves and which contribute so much to their separation and hostility; in short, – an audacious integration of Humanity.” (Ortega y Gasset, MISERIA Y ESPLENDOR DE LA TRADUCCIÓN, V: 444).

So, if meaning depends on circumstances and occasions, it follows that a given signifier is capable of receiving different meanings. This happens in everyday language, but it happens especially when dealing with writers, since “escribir bien consiste en hacer continuamente pequeñas erosiones a la gramática, al uso establecido, a la norma vigente de la lengua. Es un acto de rebeldía permanente contra el contorno social, una subversión. Escribir bien implica cierto radical denuedo” – “to write well is to make continual incursions into grammar, into established usage, and into accepted linguistic norms. It is an act of permanent rebellion against the social environs, a subversion. To write well is to employ a certain radical courage” (Ortega y Gasset, MISERIA Y ESPLENDOR DE LA TRADUCCIÓN, V: 434); whereas the translator is not permitted to do so and, consequently, “el traductor (...) meterá al escritor traducido en la prisión del lenguaje normal, es decir, que le traicionará” – “the translator (...) will place the translated author in the prison of normal expression; that is, he will betray him” (Ibidem). The result of this narrow-mindedness is that a translated author seems to be somewhat foolish in the target language, in spite of the fact that s/he was not in his/her own language: “La traducción es el permanente *flo*u literario, y como, de otra parte, lo que solemos llamar tontería no es sino el *flo*u del pensamiento, no extrañemos que un autor traducido

nos parezca siempre un poco tonto”¹ – “Translation is the permanent literary *flou*, and since what we usually call nonsense is, on the other hand, but the *flou* of thoughts, we shouldn’t be surprised that a translated author always seems somewhat foolish to us” (Ortega y Gasset, MISERIA Y ESPLENDOR DE LA TRADUCCIÓN, V: 436. Original italics).

The reason that explains the fact that a translated author could appear as somewhat foolish for the readers of his/her work has to do with the fact that meaning is inseparable from the speaker’s perspectives and intentions. And, as well as “cada lengua comparada con otra tiene también su estilo lingüístico, lo que Humboldt llamaba ‘su forma interna’” – “each language compared to any other also has its own linguistic style, what von Humboldt called ‘its internal form’” (Ortega y Gasset, MISERIA Y ESPLENDOR DE LA TRADUCCIÓN, V: 436. Original single quotation marks),² every writer has his/her own style, which consists in “la tendencia general de estas desviaciones en un escritor es lo que llamamos estilo” – “the general trend of these deviations in a writer is what we call his style” (Ortega y Gasset, MISERIA Y ESPLENDOR DE LA TRADUCCIÓN, V: 436) and which makes it “siempre unigénito” – always unique (ENSAYO DE ESTÉTICA A MANERA DE PRÓLOGO, VI: 263), as The Only Begotten Son of God Himself is. If every language has its own “internal form” and every writer has his/her own “style”, it follows that translation can’t be a clone of the original text dressed up under the clothes of another language. It is not possible because, contrary to the saying, dealing with languages “clothes do make a man”, and, consequently, “la traducción no es un doble del original; no es, no debe querer ser la obra misma con léxico distinto” – “translation is not a duplicate of the original text; it is not – it shouldn’t try to be – the work itself with a different vocabulary” (Ortega y Gasset, MISERIA Y ESPLENDOR DE LA TRADUCCIÓN, V: 449).

Now then, if translation can’t be a duplicate of the original text with a different vocabulary, it follows that, conversely to Fray Luis de León, whose ideal of translation consisted in “no añadir ni quitar sentencia, y con guardar cuanto es posible las figuras del original, y su

¹ Since J. Ortega y Gasset is talking with French scholars, he resorts to French words from time to time. Here *flou* (*fuzziness, vagueness, blur, haziness*) is written in French.

² J. Ortega y Gasset is alluding to the Humboldtian concept of “innere Form der Sprache”. Further information on the topic can be found in (Di Cesare 1996).

donaire, y hacer que hablen en Castellano, y no como extranjeras y advenedizas, sino como nacidas en él y naturales” – not adding nor taking away judgement, and in keeping as much as possible the original figures (of speech), their gracefulness, and not making them speak Spanish like foreigners and upstarts, but rather as natives and those born in the language (León, 1992: 47), J. Ortega y Gasset will claim that “sólo cuando arrancamos al lector de sus hábitos lingüísticos y le obligamos a moverse dentro de los del autor, hay propiamente traducción” – “it is only when we force the reader from his linguistic habits and oblige him to move within those of the author that there is actually translation” (Ortega y Gasset, MISERIA Y ESPLENDOR DE LA TRADUCCIÓN, V: 448).

Based on the discussion above, two final consequences must be noted. On the one hand, since a translation can't be a duplicate of a given text, but some kind of apparatus which re-writes the original text, it follows that “se colige que caben de un mismo texto diversas traducciones. Es imposible, o por lo menos lo es casi siempre, acercarnos a la vez a todas las dimensiones del texto original” – “it stands to reason that the diverse translations are fitting for the same text. It is, at least it almost always is, impossible to approximate all the dimensions of the original text at the same time” (Ortega y Gasset, MISERIA Y ESPLENDOR DE LA TRADUCCIÓN, V: 450), since the original text can be interpreted and understood from different viewpoints, all of them coherent with what is said in the source language (Chamizo Domínguez 2006 and 2007). And, on the other hand, as J. Ortega y Gasset considered the core of philosophy should be dialog, which is not other than “el *logos* desde el punto de vista del *otro*, del prójimo” – “the *logos* from the viewpoint of the *other*, the fellow man” (Ortega y Gasset, PRÓLOGO PARA ALEMANES, VIII: 17. Original italics), translation has to consist in “que procuremos salir de nuestra lengua a las ajenas y no al revés, que es lo que suele hacerse. A veces, sobre todo tratándose de autores contemporáneos, será posible que la versión tenga, además de sus virtudes como traducción, cierto valor estético” – “that we try to leave our language and go to the other – and not the reverse, which is what usually is done. Sometimes, especially in treating contemporary authors, it will be possible for the version to have, besides its virtues as translation, a certain aesthetic value” (Ortega y Gasset, MISERIA Y ESPLENDOR DE LA TRADUCCIÓN, V: 452), since translation is for cultures and languages what dialog is for individuals. This is, in J. Ortega y Gas-

set's opinion, exactly what happened with the translation into German of his own works: "Las versiones al alemán de mis libros son un buen ejemplo de esto. (...) Y es que mi traductora ha forzado hasta el límite la tolerancia gramatical del lenguaje alemán para transcribir precisamente lo que no es alemán en mi modo de decir. De esta manera el lector se encuentra sin esfuerzo haciendo gestos mentales que son españoles. Descansa así un poco de sí mismo y le divierte encontrarse un rato siendo otro" – "The German versions of my books are a good example of this. (...) And it is successful because my translator¹ has forced the grammatical tolerance of the German language to its limits in order to carry over precisely what is not German in my way of speaking. In this way, the reader effortlessly makes mental gestures that are Spanish. He relaxes a bit and for a while is amused at being another" (Ortega y Gasset, *MISERIA Y ESPLENDOR DE LA TRADUCCIÓN*, V: 452).

Not surprisingly, the implications of M. Bakhtin's and J. Ortega y Gasset's ideas for translation theory are significant. In fact, it can be argued that their ideas helped to pave the way for a paradigmatic shift in the views on the nature of translation. In his book (1991: 65-69) D. Robinson identifies three paradigms in the development of views on translation. The first – Augustinian paradigm – viewed translation as process of recording/transmitting messages with the word-for-word ideal. The second – Lutheran – paradigm viewed translation as a process of conversion with the sense-for-sense ideal. The third – Romantic – paradigm translation came to view translation as a process of liberation from internal oppression and consequent salvation (of meaning) with the ideal being both word-for-word and sense-for sense. It is no exaggeration to say that M. Bakhtin and J. Ortega y Gasset can be viewed as helping to introduce this third paradigm, calling for dialogic relationships between languages and cultures. In this respect, the parallel between this paradigm and M. Bakhtin and J. Ortega y Gasset's ideas, influenced by Schleiermacher and the overall German hermeneutic tradition, can not be ignored.

¹ This translation could be considered an excellent instance of the thesis that J. Ortega y Gasset is expounding, since the Spanish text makes clear that J. Ortega y Gasset's translator is a female while the English translation disregards such information.

Thus, from this tirad (Romantic) paradigm's perspective, translation is not a search for "equivalence". Translation as a search for "equivalence" is counter-productive because, first of all, "perfect equivalence" can never be achieved, and, secondly and most importantly, such a search views relationships between languages and cultures as "barriers", separating meanings that "belong" to this or that language and culture. In real life, "words do not really belong to anyone, sine they aren't 'property' that can be allotted or stolen or trespassed upon, but float freely in the dialogical public domain <...> there can be no pure or perfect or ideal correspondences between them <...> Artificial boundaries can be set up and jealously maintained, but dialogized words flow back and forth across any such boundaries and render them thus politically and historically contingent" (Robinson 1991: 105).

It becomes clear then that, instead of fearing boundaries and viewing them as something to be overcome or destroyed, we should embrace them and treat them as the very essence of polyglossia and the process of translation, as such. When, through translation, meanings are liberated and salvaged the view of the world becomes more multidimensional, and people can freely choose between language signs. Such a phenomenon, for example, is found in the so-called "code switching" often used by bilingual and polylingual (sic!) language users. M. Epstein calls such a multidimensional, multilingual, "culturally curved" discourse "interlation". He writes: "Bilingual or multilingual persons have no need of a translation, but they can enjoy an interlation, a contrastive juxtaposition of two or more apparently identical texts running simultaneously in two different languages – for example, a poem of Joseph Brodsky in the Russian original and in English auto-translation. Interlation is a multilingual variation on the same theme, where the roles of "source" and "target" languages are not established or are interchangeable. One language allows the reader to perceive what another language misses or conceals" (<http://glossary.isud.org/2007/11/interlation.html>).

In an earlier work (Chamizo Domínguez & Klyukanov 2001), we described one such case of "interlation" as it applies (mostly) to the translation of technical terms in linguistic and philosophic texts whereby the "source" term is given in parenthesis right after its "target" translation. We called this device TSD – "Translation Safeguarding Device", alluding to the translator's attempt to safeguard against any

loss of meaning. We stated that “TSD <...> makes the sign two-dimensional, as it were, and the reader comes to appreciate all the complex dynamics of translation, i. e. the original text in its relation to the translation” (Chamizo-Domínguez & Klyukanov, 2001: 56). In light of the ideas discussed in the present article, we feel TSD can be best described as “Translation SALVATION Device” for its ultimate goal is to liberate meaning and save it for future uses, thus showing full potential of languages in each context of usage.

In conclusion, it is possible to argue that the views of M. Bakhtin and J. Ortega y Gasset on language, communication, and translation can be considered somewhat “romantic”, cf. the influence of German romanticism. However, their views are firmly planted in the ground, so to speak, i. e., grounded in the life experiences of concrete individuals in concrete contexts. At the same time, both thinkers realized that treating experience as just *Erfahrung*, i. e., as objective and socially regulated “form”, is not enough to understand the true nature of any symbolic act. For M. Bakhtin, “a code is a deliberately established, killed context” (1986a: 147), and for J. Ortega y Gasset, “que dos y dos son cuatro es siempre un poco triste” – “that two and two are four is always a bit sad” (PASADO Y PORVENIR DEL HOMBRE ACTUAL, IX: 19). For M. Bakhtin and J. Ortega y Gasset, communication has a both-and character, i. e., it involves signs (language signs, in the first place) and their dialogic relationships in real-life contexts. Thus, communication is always polyglossia, always translation. Through their Works as well as through their very lives M. Bakhtin and J. Ortega y Gasset showed us the value of *nostradad* as “the ground of potentialities that makes possible future concrete acts that produce the social in existential and concrete ways” (Ramsey 2007: 226).

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