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VALUE CONSTANTS OF TRANSLATION IN THE DIALOGUE OF CULTURES

In modern scientific research, the axiological approach is given a special place. Interest in this approach and its possibilities was caused by transformations of socio-cultural space against the background of new challenges resulted from a number of circumstances.

Thus, according to scientists, the globalization model established in the 1990s resulted in “indifference to high meanings and values of life,” “the process of institutional dehumanization.” Principles, which the economic model of this period was based on, contributed to releasing low human instincts, formation of various psychological and physical pathologies. As the consequence, neglecting the ideal,

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its denigration and ridicule, substitution of culture.³ Many of the globalization fruits have been poisoned, and today this is evident.

The second circumstance to be mentioned in the context we are interested in is transition of society to the “digital” era. These transformations are revolutionary in nature and affect all aspects of social life – from development of public institutions to organization of daily life and socialization of an individual, different kinds of art, various types of professional activities. There arise the following questions: how to implement digital transition with all ensuing consequences for security, sovereignty and quality of life, and what the outcome of this transition may be, what kind of society will result from these changes, and whether humanity will alter.⁴ Estimating prospects of digital transformation, experts note high probability of human intelligence degradation manifesting in clip thinking, intellectual dependence on technology (transfer of memory functions to various electronic devices), blurring the line between reality and illusion, formation of an inadequate view of the world, borrowing values and needs from digital templates, etc.⁵

³ Агеев А. И. Насколько Россия подготовлена к вызовам XXI века // Независимая газета. 2019. 14 янв.

⁴ See: Гарбовский Н. К., Костикова О. И. Интеллект для перевода: искусный или искусственный? // Вестник Моск. ун-та. Сер. 22. Теория перевода. 2019. № 4. С. 3–25.

⁵ К «цифре» готов? Оценка адаптивности высокотехнологичного комплекса России к реалиям цифровой экономики : итоговый докл. М. : ИНЭС, 2018. С. 19–21.

Against the background of these processes, scientific community strives for identifying, defining, evaluating and systematizing values that are relevant to humanity today and will prove decisive for its development.

The axiological approach is in the centre of the humanistic paradigm of education and upbringing, where a person is regarded as the highest value, and his/her well-being – as the goal of social development.

Since time immemorial, translations from one language to another have been done by people. Ignoring the Babylonian curse, translators come to rescue humanity. They constantly build bridges between peoples, races, cultures and continents, overcoming disunity, proving to be a vital link in the long chain of knowledge transfer between peoples separated by language barriers. Between the past and the present. Space and time are subject to translators. Due to them, key texts – scientific, philosophical, artistic ones – gain universality. Multilingualism and cultural diversity are not retribution from above to the human race to be proud of its *technological* capabilities, but a valuable gift. After all, as N. S. Trubetskoy stated, “a single, universal culture, devoid of any individual, national attribute, is extremely lopsided, with complete spiritual emptiness and moral savagery under enormous development of science and technology,” but, because of the law of diversity of national cultures, “it becomes possible for different peoples to have cultural values that are morally positive and spiritually uplifting a person.”¹ It is this opportunity that translators give humanity: by opening new horizons and broadening the outlook, they help bypass obstacles of linguistic and cultural differences and understand the world better, appreciate its diversity.

D. S. Likhachov rightly believed that interest and kind attitude to foreign culture arises only from “love for native one”, which “gradually expanding... turns into love for one’s country – for its history, its past and present, and then for the whole of humanity, for human culture.” That is why, the scientist emphasizes, “fostering love for the native land, for native culture, for native village or city, for native language is the task of paramount importance.”² It is obvious that only a person imbued with love for native word and native culture is able to successfully perform most important mission of translator, which was mentioned above.

Moreover, if love for the native teaches to love and accept the alien, then it is true, as well, that self-awareness occurs through the alien: “identity in its historicity is built via contact with the other.”³ Leibniz also wrote about this, reflecting on opportunities of native language, “translation of good books turns out to be a true touchstone for language richness or poverty, due to its flexibility for translation.”⁴ Likhachov emphasizes that the world of Russian culture is unusually rich precisely because of its receptivity: rich-

ness of the Russian language is determined by the fact that “it was created in the vast territory to be extremely various in its geographical conditions, natural diversity, variety of contacts with other peoples, presence of a second language – Church Slavonic... The Russian language consciousness, the world seen by the Russian language consciousness, includes concepts and images of *world* literature, *world* science, *world* culture – through painting, music, translations, through the Greek and Latin languages.”⁵ In his another work, he gives an example of a different kind, confirming the life-giving role of intercultural contacts for strengthening their identity: once banned books by Russian authors first became the commons abroad, and from there, recognized and glorified, returned to their homeland. “Our literature, our art have enriched world culture, having become a catalyst for public and spiritual life. The same, literature and art of foreign countries affect our culture, enriching us spiritually, aesthetically,” the scientist concludes.⁶

So, the cultural-creative essence of translation is obvious, and it is embodied by people – translators – “post horses of enlightenment”, as the great Russian poet depicted in the capacious image.

However, history shows that translation, one of the most ancient and constantly in demand in all ages type of intellectual activities, nevertheless, has not received unambiguous assessment of society. For many centuries, regularly consuming “fruits” of translation activities in all fields of public life – in politics and diplomacy, in science and religion, in art and military affairs, human society has not tired of reproaching translators for inaccuracy, incorrectness and even betrayal.⁷

Today, as before, in public opinion, a translator is often regarded as a person performing some kind of auxiliary activity by providing “communication services”. To perform this function, it supposedly does not require a lot of intellectual effort, one’s own thoughts, the ability to make independent decisions. Discussing significance of translation for modern cultural space, researchers state “the shadowy, repressed, rejected and secondary position of translation,” up to the “arousing suspicion”, which affects the position of translators.⁸ This position, coupled with active developments in the field of artificial intelligence, poses a threat to the art of translation as a kind of creative activity of individuals and the source of their livelihood.

Contesting with artificial intelligence, a human translator can lose, because (s)he has a smaller amount of RAM, there is no immediate access to big databases, but even if there was such an opportunity, data processing by man would take much longer than that by a machine. Moreover, the process of training and continuous improvement of a human translator’s skills is extremely resource-intensive. Automatic translation with all its flaws proves economically more profitable.

Therefore, today in the science of translation, attempts to comprehend and evaluate significance of the human factor in translation come to the fore, to understand issues of translation deontology, to build models of interaction in the human – artificial intelligence system relevant for intercul-

¹ *Трубецкой Н. С.* Вавилонская башня и смешение языков // Трубецкой Н. С. *Наследие Чингисхана*. М.: Аграф, 1999. С. 83–84.

² *Лихачев Д. С.* Избранные труды по русской и мировой культуре. 2-е изд., перераб. и доп. / сост. и науч. ред. А. С. Запесоцкий. СПб.: СПбГУП, 2015. С. 485.

³ *Meschonnic H.* *Étique et politique du traduire*. Lagrasse: Éditions Verdier, 2007. P. 120.

⁴ *Leibniz G.-W.* *Considérations sur les Langues en général & sur la culture de la Langue Allemande en particulier // Esprit de Leibniz ou Recueil de pensées choisies sur la religion, la morale, l’histoire, la philosophie, & c. Extraites de toutes ses œuvres Latines et Françaises*. T. 2. Lyon: Jean-Marie Bruyset, Imprimeur Libraire. Avec Approbation & Privilège du Roi, 1772. P. 229.

⁵ *Лихачев Д. С.* *Op. cit.* С. 27–28.

⁶ *Ibid.* С. 510.

⁷ See: *Костикова О. И.* История перевода: предмет, методология, место в науке о переводе // *Вестник Моск. ун-та. Сер. 22. Теория перевода*. 2011. № 2. С. 3–22.

⁸ *Berman A.* *L’Épreuve de l’étranger*. P.: Editions Gallimard., 1984. P. 6.

tural communication and creation of multilingual content, as well as to forecast social relevance in future of translation as an activity in general and a human translator in particular.

Common to these studies, discussions and searches is the concept “value of translation”, the idea of translation as a good, the matter of realization of the value of translation, its usefulness, acceptability of its quality and variability of its evaluation.

Who is a translator – an ordinary bilingual, a literalist who obediently follows the letter in absence of own writer’s gift, a traitor-transposer who distorts the original text, destroying its spirit due to his/her poor competence, or a comprehensively educated intellectual, linguist, ethnographer, philosopher, psychologist, historian and wordsmith, “who differs from the creator only by name,” a necessary and irreplaceable link in the chain of translanguing and crosscultural communication?

N. K. Garbovsky defines translation as “social function of communicative mediation” in a certain situation and for certain purposes.¹ The social function of translation is “satisfying the information hunger” and overcoming “the communicative discomfort” caused by the inability to understand the other person due to difference in communicative codes in conditions of bilingual communication.² But a translator has no ethical right to behave like an ordinary “communicant” (reader or listener). A translator is a psychologist, researcher, historian, ethnographer, literary critic, philosopher, who must make out in the text, in the message, exactly what the author encoded in the signs of his/her language.³ Where there is a sign, there is ideology, Bakhtin wrote, “we, in fact, neither ever utter words nor hear words, but hear truth or lie, good or evil, significant or insignificant, pleasant or unpleasant, etc. The word is always filled with ideological or vital content and meaning.”⁴ For translation, it is both a challenge and an opportunity. Whatever translatability of the material, which the translator works at, was, (s)he never can be exempted from the function of a critic, which determines the quality of his/her work.

This function includes two objectives: besides analyzing the actual *contents* (realized in the unity of form and content) of what is translated and what it embodies into, the translator must determine the viewpoint on each of these texts, in accordance with the field of social practice (technical, legal, medical, educational, political, etc.), within which and for which the translation is carried out. The viewpoint, one of basic concepts of hermeneutics, implies *distancing* mandatory for a critical position. The key to limiting subjective bias, a kind of *warranty*, in this case, is reliance on the previous corpus of valuable and significant texts in the two languages. Dualism of the viewpoint and the warranty ensuring its impartiality determines the value of translation, turning it into a genuine creation.⁵

The tendency of reducing the original text to the “source” and the translation text – to the “target” is, un-

doubtedly, still common among adherents of information issues, as is the desire to see in translation a kind of dialogue or compromise between two existing value systems – among followers of the communicative paradigm. Translation is not just transition from one system of ideas or beliefs to another one, from one ideology to another one: it is at equal distance from them, and opens up new space, enriching the corpus of both languages involved. If the translator refuses his function of a critic and does not maintain the necessary distance, then he only concretizes the already established belief system: Rastier calls this kind of translation ideological.⁶

The problem of correlation between the content and the value of translation is evident when considering disadvantages of machine translation: limitation only to the content of the text, in absence of both the viewpoint and the warranty mentioned above, deprives the translation of value. The reverse side of the coin is tendentious translation that seeks to impose an uncritical viewpoint: regardless of its political correctness, it is nothing but violence against the original text, and emaciation of its translation.

The “elusive” ideology is omnipresent, its peculiarity is that it has no special markers, as is sometimes believed when analyzing various types of discourses. Of course, one can give examples of words filled with symbolic meaning or imagery, but it is no less important that the meaning of a text is often formed not by words, – a machine can translate words too! – but by their absence. Absence of certain words in the text speaks volumes, and may be explained by avoiding them by the author, and a number of other factors. So, talking about cultural sense, cultural experience, which are mandatory for creating works of art, A. S. Zapesotsky made assumption to be fundamentally important for the methodology of translation, “conceptual spheres of a particular literary text, of its author and of its reader may consist of many individual concepts, each of which is not only a ‘spoken’ something that has found specific verbal embodiment in the national language, but also ‘implied’ – potentially incorporated, but not quite realized, perhaps even by the author himself, for which the word simply has not been found yet.”⁷ For translation, both the said and the not-said are significant, as the value of the text is consistent with its “de-ontology”.

Translation practice depends on the philology of the people, into whose language the translation is done, in a particular historical epoch, on public notion about the beautiful and the ugly, the right and the wrong, the necessary and the unnecessary. Approaches to assessing quality, truth and accuracy of translation are subject to cycles and fashion, the same solutions in various time periods could be evaluated differently, and sometimes even opposite. The contradiction that arises when estimating translators’ activities that permeate its entire history, can be explained both by the ontological dichotomy of translation activity, and by the contradiction of the general and the particular – the two sides of the quality category. Specific mistakes made by translators have been severely criticized at all times, successful translation solutions have been admired. But in historical coverage, translation errors and luck appear as particular cases. Over time, they are forgotten, and only a gen-

¹ *Гарбовский Н. К.* Теория перевода. М. : Изд-во Моск. ун-та, 2004. С. 214.

² See: *Гарбовский Н. К., Костикова О. И.* Перевод и общество // Вестник Моск. ун-та. Сер. 22. Теория перевода. 2018. № 1. С. 17–40.

³ *Гарбовский Н. К.* О переводе. М. : Форум, 2016. С. 593.

⁴ *Бахтин М. М.* (под маской) Фрейдизм. Формальный метод в литературоведении. Марксизм и философия языка. Статьи. М. : Лабиринт, 2000. С. 406.

⁵ *Rastier F.* Préface // *Idéologie et traduction.* Sous la direction d’Astrid Guillaume. P. : L’Harmattan, 2016. P. 7.

⁶ *Rastier F.* Op. cit. P. 7.

⁷ *Занецоцкий А. С.* Культурология Дмитрия Лихачева. 3-е изд. СПб. : СПбГУИ, 2022. С. 138.

eral idea of translation and its social significance remain in the public consciousness.

Thus, variability of translation evaluation is opposed to its value constants.

Translation activity indeed seems to be one of the most important social functions that ensure the ability to live for multilingual and multicultural human society. Without translation, communication, as one of the most important conditions for society's existence, often turns out to be very difficult or even impossible.

In this regard, negative judgments about translators are of interest not so much as characterization of translation activity in general, but as reflection of firmly rooted critical attitude towards each particular act of translation, as a reminder of imminence of comments and criticisms, analysis and reasoning that it inevitably entails. Ontologically, translation is a "secondary" object, which, on the one hand, raises questions about its compliance with the "primary" object, and, on the other hand, a priori imposes a second-rate stamp on it.

This contradiction of the general and the particular in the context of translation activity is especially clearly manifested when referring to the history of translation, which preserves names of great people who had significantly influenced on development of human civilization.¹

Here, the translator's personality is of great importance: it is the most complex intellectual psychophysical activity of the person in translation that creates something to be called a kind of *added value* – positive value for an individual, society, culture, which appeared as the result of translation activity in terms of its ability to satisfy latent or hidden needs, generate innovations, be a catalyst for progress. Both the value of translation and its added value is the role that translation plays or can play in the life of an individual and society in terms of needs, interests and goals. However, if the value of translation is related to satisfaction of specific needs and expectations from translation, within its direct function realized by society, then the added value is associated with the element of surprise evaluated positively and only indirectly related to the tasks of communicative mediation, solved in each specific act of translation. Added value is always concomitant, but often the primary property of translation, which manifests itself in the form of translation constants in historical understanding, not as a specific act of translanguing communication, but as a phenomenon contributing to establishment of a dialogue or settlement of a conflict of cultures.

Added value includes everything that constitutes the great civilizing mission of translation: creative writing, dissemination and development of religions, improvement of philology, transferring scientific knowledge, development of statehood in the bilingual environment, multiplication of cultural centers, maintenance and dissemination of spiritual values, etc. In the modern world experiencing the era of

"big data", the translator turns out to be one of the most important links of the general information system, generating *new data*. Due to translators' activity, the general world information system is replenished with so-called translanguing big data, i. e. multilingual images of phenomena of a particular culture.

"Translation was and remains one of the most significant and worthy types of mediation in universal global interaction," Goethe wrote. Hugo expressed similar thoughts, talking about the civilizing mission of translation: "Translators serve civilization. They pour spiritual substance from one to the other. They serve dissemination of ideas. Due to them, one nation's genius meets another nation's genius. Fruitful combinations. After all, a new thought is just as necessary as new blood." Heidegger believed that "the essence of translation is not to facilitate communication with other-language speakers, but to help in solving some urgent for everyone issue. It serves mutual understanding in some higher sense. And every step in this direction is a blessing for the nations."

Today, the most important mission of translators is appreciated in the world community at the highest level: On May 24, 2017, the UN General Assembly adopted a special Resolution confirming "the role of professional translation in bringing peoples closer, strengthening peace and promoting mutual understanding and development." This role is highly responsible and extremely relevant today, because as stated in Article 6 of the Declaration of the Rights of Culture developed by the team of scientists of St. Petersburg University of the Humanities and Social Sciences (SPbUHSS) under the scientific supervision of D. S. Likhachov, "Cultural cooperation, dialogue and mutual understanding of peoples of the world are the key to justice and democracy, the condition for preventing international and interethnic conflicts, violence and wars."²

Translation has always been a social activity *sui generis* in the sense that it is in demand, carried out and evaluated by society, or rather, by its particular representatives. Social relations play a crucial role in translators' professional life. Function of translation is not determined by a formal analysis of the source text; it is pragmatically set by the goal of transcultural communication, and quality of translation is determined, in addition to linguistic equivalence, by many other factors, and above all by the social context, which largely guides and regulates translation activities. It will largely depend on social attitudes what, how, when and for what purpose will be transferred from one culture to another, will become the property of language and literature, developing and enriching them or, conversely, adapting to them as much as possible. Or it may sink into oblivion, never having received public recognition, or will freeze in anticipation of changes in cultural guidelines, social attitudes, political situation, etc.

¹ See: Гарбовский Н. К., Костикова О. И. История перевода. Практика, технологии, теории. Очерки по истории перевода. М. : Изд-во Моск. ун-та, 2021.

² Лихачев Д. С. Ор. cit. С. 503.