# Epistemology, translation and a path for meaning[*]

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**Abstract:**
Basically, this essay traces an epistemological line. It starts by mentioning how positivism has influenced thought and knowledge today, especially in the field of Translation Studies. There is also reference to the influence of continental philosophy, known as well as post-structuralism and its influence on what has been called the *Cultural Turn in Translation Studies.* From both paradigms, scholars work hard in order to give a scientific status to the discipline. In his path towards understanding, Paul Ricoeur has made a significant contribution with his inquiry method and his notion of *meaning.*
**Key words:** Translation Studies, epistemology, meaning, event, dialectics.

**Resumen:**
Este ensayo tiene una mirada epistemológica en dos sentidos. En la primera parte del texto, se hace referencia a cómo el positivismo ha influenciado la forma en que pensamos hoy, en particular en el campo de la traductología. También se señala, de forma más breve, la influencia que el post-estructuralismo ha tenido en el cambio de paradigma en la disciplina, denominado *El giro cultural en la traductología.* Desde ambos paradigmas, los investigadores han intentado dar un estatus científico a la disciplina. En la segunda parte, se describe el método de investigación utilizado por el filósofo Paul Ricoeur para explicar su idea de *sentido,* en su recorrido hacia la comprensión.
**Palabras clave:** Traductología, epistemología, sentido, acontecimiento, dialéctica.

**Résumé :**
Cet essai présente une double vision épistémologique. Dans la première partie du texte, on fait référence à l'influence du positivisme sur la pensée contemporaine, en particulier, sur la pensée de la Traductologie. On fait référence aussi à l'appropriation que la Traductologie a faite de quelques idées du poststructuralisme, phénomène désigné comme *Le tournant culturel de la Traductologie.* À partir des deux paradigmes, les spécialistes ont essayé de donner un statut scientifique à la discipline. Dans la deuxième partie du texte, on fait la description de la méthode de recherche dont Paul Ricoeur se sert pour exprimer sa notion du *sens,* dans son chemin vers la compréhension.
**Mots clés :** Traductologie, épistémologie, sens, événement, dialectique.

**Introduction**

The book *Enlarging Translation, Empowering Translators* written by Maria Tymoczko and published in 2007 inspired the writing of this essay. Reflections on epistemology such as 'the place of enunciation' demonstrate that there is a possibility to tackle philosophical issues other than hermeneutics in the realm of Translation Studies, issues such as epistemology, philosophy of language, ethics, political science and Law.

This essay traces an epistemological line. It starts by presenting how positivism[1] has influenced thought today, especially in the field of Translation Studies. There is also reference to the influence of continental philosophy, known as well as post-structuralism[2] and its influence on what has been called the *Cultural turn of Translation Studies.*

The overlapping of paradigms has made things difficult for Translation Studies scholars in their attempt to find a common ground and the limits of the field in order to define translation. The complexity of translation suggests that different ways of inquiry need to be explored; therefore one example of a dialectic method of research is presented.

Accordingly, the main purpose of this text is to explore one methodological alternative for inquiry that reconciles structure and hermeneutics. It is the method used by the philosopher Paul Ricoeur, best known in the Translation Studies field for the three essays that compose the book *On Translation.* In this case, the reference is his book *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning*. The method and the approach suggested here are quite interesting in order to undertake the linguistic and semantic analysis that should be made so as to enhance reflection on translation[3]. The essay finishes with some commentaries on the dialogical event given in translation, presenting one example. The example is a short analysis of a translation that has been considered as an appropriation, it is H.D. Thoreau's *Civil Disobedience* translated to Spanish by a local Colombian thinker Fernando Gonzalez.

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[1] Saint-Simon and Comte advanced three ideas typical of positivism that later on influenced Social Sciences: "(1) that science is the highest form of knowledge and that philosophy thus must be scientific; (2) that there is one scientific method common to all the sciences; and (3) that metaphysical claims are pseudoscientific." *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Online access: June 17th, 2012.

[2] "Post-structuralism is a late-twentieth-century development in philosophy and literary theory, particularly associated with the work of Jacques Derrida and his followers. It originated as a reaction against structuralism, which first emerged in Ferdinand de Saussure's work on linguistics. By the 1950s structuralism had been adapted in anthropology (Lévi-Strauss), psychoanalysis (Lacan) and literary theory (Barthes), and there were hopes that it could provide the framework for rigorous accounts in all areas of the human sciences. Post-structuralist critiques of structuralism are typically based on two fundamental theses: (1) that no system can be autonomous (self-sufficient) in the way that structuralism requires; and (2) that the defining dichotomies on which structuralist systems are based express distinctions that do not hold up under careful scrutiny." *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Online access: June 17th, 2012.

[3] The 4 essays that compose the book: *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* are the expanded text, product of a series of lectures delivered by Paul Ricoeur in the Fall 0f 1973, at Texas Christian University. Although the main part of the author's work is in French, these lectures were originally delivered and written in English.

**The overlapping of paradigms**

The way epistemology is approached today tends to have two aspects: nomothetic and idiographic[4]; one antinomy that overlaps in positivist and post-structuralist paradigms and in natural and social sciences. Along with this tendency of approaching knowledge, there are also two trends that have shaped the way social sciences behave, especially in the 20th century: (i) the gaps between economy, politics and socio-cultural aspects of one same reality, (ii) the undervalue given to the notions *space* and *time*, taking them as exogenous unchangeable aspects that have nothing or almost nothing to do with knowledge (Immanuel Wallerstein, 1991: 3, 4,134).

The previous short explanation of the epistemological panorama today is important to understand why disciplines such as Translation Studies emerged only in the mid-twentieth century. First, following the method of natural science, social science made divisions and subdivisions of its 'object of study', thus *society* (not societies and their complex natures) became a series of so-called disciplines or branches, that isolated from notions such as *time* and *space* could be easily studied, explained and modified. Likewise, translation as a social practice became an object of study.

Second, the development science and technology had during World War II brought out the relevance of translation, especially for Intelligence Services, the quick flow of information, propaganda, ideological campaigns, cultural influence, and hence the consolidation of power. This awareness led to many different investigations on translation headed by philosophers of language, linguists, and technicians, i.e., Roman Jakobson, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and W. V. O. Quine (Maria Tymoczko, 2007: 20-30).

The first movement or school of thought that saw to the research on translation was Linguistics followed by analytical philosophy. With authors like Quine and Wittgenstein, questions for meaning and usefulness of language emerged; following ideas like the one developed by Walter Benjamin in his work *The Task of the Translator*[5]. Consequently there were remarks on indeterminacies of meaning, one-to-many procedures, the relationship language-experience, and doubts on normative and prescriptive approaches to translation. This is one example of how positivist thinkers acknowledged ideas that once could have been seen like pseudoscientific.

These new visions towards translation implied that there is not a single or a "positive" correct way to behave, that the work of the translator goes beyond the use of two languages, and assumptions of multiplicity of meanings, genre perspectives, anti-power positions came to the fore in Translation Studies.

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[4] *Nomothetic knowledge*: the discovery of general laws in order to master nature. *Idiographic knowledge*: description of individual and unique aspects of reality with the aim of self-affirmation. The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy (1995). Page 885
[5] He notices that one expression can contain a variety of meanings.

All these assumptions, ideas, and research were most of the time determined by a positivist angle. An important explanation of the positivist pathway taken by linguists in the search for meaning during the first half of the 20th century can be found in the book *Les problèmes théoriques de la traduction* (Georges Mounin, 1963). In this book the author shows the great contributions Linguistics made to the development of science and technique, by creating systems and sets of codes and symbols. He also suggests that in the search for meaning, the inquiry should move away from structures and systems, and it should approach ethnography and philology.

Later, this indication of an epistemological shift was influenced by the emerging movement of continental philosophy also known as post-structuralism. Kathleen Davis examines how the philosopher Jacques Derrida uses *Deconstruction* in the search for meaning. She offers a good example of how this author addresses issues of meaning not by detaching meaning from context with scarce interest in history. For making meaning, the philosopher urges readers (translators) to depict the course of concepts in the tradition of thought and the use given in one specific community or country (Davis, 2001).

The overlapping of paradigms mentioned above is clear, and Translation Studies as a discipline is not beyond this trend. This is perhaps one of the reasons why there is no agreement in the search for a definition of *translation.* The definition of *translation* evolves from prescriptive and analytical positions to post-structuralist wider views. It is shaped within the concepts of *text and meaning* developed during and after the World War II period: *text* was regarded as a set of documents and formats to shape culture. *Meaning* was understood as the linguistic nature of the language, language as code, as system (Tymoczko, 2007: 53).

The attempt to define *translation* has been influenced by this overlapping of paradigms, and while some scholars expand its limits[6], others have worked in order to give it some boundaries and a scientific status[7]. A prototype concept of *translation* would not comprise all the multiplicity of elements a concept or category needs. Far from it, a prototype concept implies replication and repetition of one original or preliminary model, and narrows the possibility of richness brought by diversity. Based on the notion of *concept* developed by Wittgenstein, Maria Tymoczko suggests the use of a *cluster concept* in order to explain the nature of *translation* as a cross-cultural practice:

"Within a cluster concept approach, translation studies can affirm and investigate such distinct clusters as translations in oral contexts, translations in commercial and globalized contexts, literary translations, translations in multilingual contexts where all texts of a

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[6] See Descriptive Translation Studies and Polisystems Theory in *Handbook of Translation Studies* (ED. Yves Gambier & Luc Van Doorslaer, 2010).

[7] James Holmes creates the first attempt to frame Translation Studies in a map as a discipline in order to organize academic and research activities in the field. Citation in the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* (Baker, 2001: 277-278)

document will have the status of "originals", close literal translations of sacred texts, translations that coordinate word and image, and so forth" (2007: 105).

On the whole, we know by now that Translation Studies is a new discipline just like Anthropology or Political Science. It was born as a social practice and as a need, it has gained independence from Linguistics and Philology given the status it has taken as a branch of knowledge taught and researched at different universities. It has been influenced by the analytical and post-structuralist paradigms prevailing in social sciences. Yet, some scholars prefer to remain in one of the sides ignoring three important facts; (i) the relevance of history. It means history of the discipline and history as a research tool; (ii) that dialectic positions are proved to be the most enriching in controversial situations, (iii) and they ignore at the same time, the retarding consequences such position brings to the discipline.

The previous idea does not mean we should remain sceptical towards epistemology, taking it is just as a formula for writing papers and submitting project proposals. It means that as scholars and humanists we need to be aware of the position we take when we undertake research, teaching and practice, coming to a better understanding of the field and the world it belongs to. Tymoczko calls this position *the place of enunciation* (2007).

## Meaning: the synthesis of a dialectical analysis

Self-reflection is both action and notion at the same time. As an action, it enhances individual practices and helps to find out alternatives in complex situations, for instance when making decisions in the case of polysemy or a cultural gap between concepts of being, relations, processes, etc. As well, the action of self-reflection is a basis for the empowerment of the translator as a member of an academic and/or professional community; it is the first step to social projection of the translators' activity.

As a notion, self-reflection is an ontological concept that saw the light in the hermeneutic theory of Martin Heidegger. For him, the question of *being* precedes the question of *method* or knowledge. Self-reflection implies self-understanding as "the stands we take to define our being as a totality" and as "*discourse* in the sense that we are always articulating – or addressing and discussing – the entities that show up in our concernful absorption in current situations"[8].

With his theory of interpretation, Paul Ricoeur has two purposes: 1) to reflect about concrete action "*Reflection is the appropriation of our effort to exist and our desire to be through (à travers) the works which testify this effort and this desire*". Quote taken from T.M. van Leeuwen (1981: 69-70). 2) To get to know and transit the long route to understanding, because "the route to understanding is part of the constitution of understanding" (Simms, 2003: 36-37).

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[8] The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy (1995: 318)

But how can we relate the work of the translators to Ricoeur's purposes? Firstly, by describing the translators' idea of *understanding* and the route they take in order to *understand.* This is, describing the translators' ideas of *meaning;* secondly, by describing the efforts and desires shown in translations.

This part of the essay is devoted to make a parallel between notions and ideas concerning *meaning*. The main purpose is to analyze how *meaning* is related to discourse, semantics, and dialogue. The authors involved in this parallel exploration are: Danica Seleskovitch and Marianne Lederer and their work on interpretation (1986); Maria Tymoczko and her concept of meaning in translation (2007), Aurelia Klimkiewicz with her idea of dialogue in her Ph.D. Thesis on Bachtine and the Hermeneutics of 20th Century (2001). These four authors made their inquiries tracing a notion of *understanding* from the Translation Studies perspective, and their ideas are going to be contrasted with the analysis of *meaning* made by the philosopher Paul Ricoeur in his essay: *Language as Discourse* (1976)[9].

There are two points of coincidence between the notion of *meaning* developed by Seleskovitch and Lederer and that of Ricoeur, one point is that meaning is not in isolated words and the second point of coincidence is that meaning comes from intention.

**One:** *meaning does not lie in isolated words or expressions, but in discourse*. For Translation Studies scholars, it is the rapport between phrases and the whole text in general, the one that allows the reader to get the meaning.[10] Paul Ricoeur thought the same; however, the philosopher follows a longer route in order to explain why isolated words have no meaning and utterances do. Ricoeur explains how discourse is expressed by the utterance, as this one contains "the polarity of singular identification and universal predication" (1976: 11). Singular - universal is then one of the dialectic dualities the philosopher provides in his pathway for reaching *understanding. Singular:* Identification of the person, the very human being who says something and expresses his/her individuality. *Universal:* the expression of the kind of relations with the world and sameness to others.

**Two:** the utterer's *intention[11]* or *meaning.* But what is this "communication intention"? According to Ricoeur, the utterance is the entity that supports discourse, and here lies the difference between semiotics and semantics. While semiotics is the science of signs, semantics is the science of sentences. The former are virtual as they belong to an imaginary system, and the latter are real as they are directly related to sense and persons, because languages don't speak, persons do. Sentences or utterances, as the author also

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[9] This is the first esssay of the book: *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning.* (1976). The Texas Christian University Press.

[10] My  translation: « Cet élément, c'est la mise en rapport des phrases isolées », « et c'est l'ensemble du texte au fur et à mesure qu'il se déroule à la lecture […] » (Seleskovitch and Lederer, 1986: 16, 17).

[11] «Seule l'intention de communiquer qui construit la parole libère les mots de la polysémie, les phrases de leur ambiguïté et les charge de sens » (Ibid., 1986 : 17).

calls them, are speech events. And what is the event? The discourse itself is an event, the event that somebody speaks. This speech event contains an inner movement of self-reference, and with the help of grammatical devices, the person who speaks makes meaning: there is a subject of the speech event (personal pronouns); there is reference to the 'now' of the speech event and of the speaker (verb tenses) (Ricoeur, 1976: 13). There is also reference to the space, time and the manner of the speech event and of the speaker (adverbs and adjectives). So, the so called utterer's intention or meaning is explained by the philosopher with a movement or a reference to self. But it is important to clarify that this movement has two moments: one noetic and one noematic[12].

The utterer's intentionality is also found in the 'force' given in the speech event. Called the *illocutionary act* by John L. Austin, the utterance becomes more than a set of words or a code with combinatory capacities that are used to just saying something. The *illocutionary act* is the performance strength that makes the things happen as they are said and refers to the beliefs, willing, wishes, or fears of the person who speaks. It lets us tell the difference between a question and a command or between an inquiry and a complaint, etc. The *illocutionary act* presents a similar movement of that one in the speech event: the dialectics intentionality-grammatical devices.

Another author on Translation Studies that analyses the notion of *meaning* is Maria Tymoczko. This author develops a wide notion of *meaning* and one aspect she highlights is that meaning is not static. "Meanings are not stable. The current meaning of a sign looks back to earlier meanings and forward to future meanings: there is no foundational meaning for any sign" (2007: 294).

For Ricoeur, this aspect of non-stability is very important. But in his case, he does make the difference between signs and sentences, making clear that meaning does not lie in signs but in sentences, as they contain the *particular – universal* dialectics mentioned before. As for the non-stability, the philosopher describes discourse as a temporal event. The message in the discourse refers to a specific moment, it has a time thus it is real. It is contingent; it depends on actions and conditions. "It reminds us that discourse is realized temporally and in a present moment, whereas the language system is virtual and outside of time" (1976: 11).

This aspect of temporality in the discourse is very important in the work of the translator, for temporality here does not mean to learn the meaning of a word in a short-term. The idea of temporality implies the ability to discover or identify the same

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[12] *Noetic*: (From Greek *noêkitos,* from *noêtos, 'perceiving'*), of or related to apprehension by the intellect. In a strict sense the term refers to non-sensuos data given to the cognitive faculty, which discloses their intelligible meaning as distinguished from their sensible apprehension […] Husserl uses the term to describe the intentionality or dyadic character of consciousness in general. It is a corresponding mental activity. *Noematic analysis*: It is the phenomenological description of the object. The *noema* is the object as described phenomenologically. Entries taken from: The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy (1995: 348-349, 536)

meaning in different settings or discourses, or the possibility to recall that meaning and use it in a situation where it can work as a referent. "An act of discourse is not merely transitory and vanishing, however. It may be identified and re-identified as the same so that we may say it again in other words. We may even say it in another language or translate it from one language into another" (*Ibid.,* 1976: 9).

So far, we have mentioned four components of the notion *meaning:* the dialectics particular-universal, the self-reference movement of the speech event, the utterer's intentionality, and its temporal character. But meaning is meaning inasmuch as it unfolds to another person, and this unfolding takes place in *dialogue.* In the following paragraphs, the idea of dialogue and its relevance in *meaning* will be shown. Here, ideas of Aurelia Klimkiewicz and Paul Ricoeur are contrasted.

Question-answer dialectics is quintessentially the core of dialogue and communication. Dialogue has different purposes:

1) To help the other identify my intentionality. By means of dialogue the interlocutors get to know each other's identities, the type of relationship between them, and the existential features that make them different from others. This is the particularity, the subjects of the utterances.
2) "To initiate the screening function of the context" (Ricoeur, 1976: 17). In order to enhance mutual understanding, dialogue enlightens the situation limitations, and veils or unveils the complexity of non-linguistic facts.
3) To narrow the polysemy of words, by doing so, dialogue reduces the possibility of multiple understandings.
4) To access understanding. "In hermeneutical thought, the fact of questioning, opposed to certainty or authority, is considered to be the key of interpretation and the access to understanding[13]" (Klimkiewicz, 2001: 156).
5) But maybe, the most important purpose or function of dialogue is the role it plays as an event (speaking-listening dialectics). It is the convergence of a double dialectic movement between speech events and meanings. This is the convergence of two predicates, the convergence of two intentions.

Ricoeur states that the most difficult aspect for understanding the dialectical movement between speech event and meaning is what is actually communicated by the illocutionary act, and this the psychological aspect of the intention.

> "In the promise, for example, there is a commitment; in the assertion, a belief; in a wish, a want, etc. […] But these 'mental acts' are not radically incommunicable. Their intention implies the intention of being recognized, therefore the intention of the other's intention. […] the reciprocity of intentions is the event of dialogue" (Ricoeur, 1976: 18 - 19).

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[13] My translation: "La question, étant opposé à la certitude ou à l'autorité, est considérée dans la pensée herméneutique comme une clé de l'interprétation et un accès à la compréhension ».

The utterance is more than an objective proposition made out of codes and signs to be analyzed in their multiple combinations and through their meanings in dictionaries. The essence of utterance, after all is to let the other know, for instance that commitment, that belief, and that will. There must be a reply, for without it the encounter is impossible. As Klimkiewicz says, the lack of response means the denial of the interlocutor's intentions; it is the denial of the other; which means the destruction of the dialectical movement, the destruction of dialogue (2001: 157).

In the previous parallel, we mentioned four aspects of meaning. Those aspects accounted for the psychological level of meaning; it is the internal dialectical movements, the temporary character meaning has as a human act, the intentionality, and the relevance of grammatical devices in order to "say". Now we add a new aspect that is beyond the psychological level, as it leads to the construction of a new event, the event of dialogue. Meaning can only be found in dialogue, and in dialogue there is a shift from a psychological level to an ethical one.

The actual fact of listening is an act of recognition, of praise, of acknowledgement, and respect. When we listen, we learn the interlocutor's intentions and how internal, private experiences and processes are cast to the world and are "made public". "Language is the exteriorization thanks to which an impression is transcended and becomes an ex-pression" (Ricoeur, 1976: 19).

After all, G. Mounin was not wrong when in his book *Les problèmes théoriques de la traduction* (1963), he concluded that the syntactic analysis of language was very limited in order to find out meaning, and what really matters in this case is the experience of the world we have and how it is communicated.

At this point we have shown the long route followed by Translation Studies authors and by the philosopher Paul Ricoeur in order to find out about the notion *meaning* and how it is related to semantics, discourse and dialogue. But before approaching one case of translation, it is important to go back to the initial idea of this essay: the epistemological concerns.

The purpose of including a philosopher in the reflection and discussion on translation is not an incidental matter or an eccentricity. The purpose here is to consider his method of analysis and how it implies his position towards knowledge. Based on the hermeneutical form of inquiry, Paul Ricoeur describes the way objects, in this case cultural objects, are given. He shows how notions such as time and space affect the description of *meaning,* and how this concept has an inner dynamic that advances towards an external one. There is also the quest for the apparently opposed components of the object, which act in an endless dynamics of thesis, antithesis and synthesis. These relationships were called in this case 'dialectics'.

Similarly, we can learn his epistemological position when we observe his remarks on how structuralism and analytical philosophy have eclipsed discourse, message and meaning, as well as the human who speaks in the search for recognition. It does not mean, though that the author does not consider Linguistics and philosophy of language important paradigms for science and knowledge, as they made part of his frame for the construction of this essay.

The former are then the mechanisms used by the philosopher in order to frame his investigation on *meaning* in language. Based on a phenomenological method, he directs his works towards an ethical and humanistic project: the recognition of the other and the enhancement of liberal arts, in this case writing.

**Fernando Gonzalez and his graduation dissertation *Una Tesis*. A reformulation for a different context.**

There are many examples of translations that attest the effort and desires of individuals, authors and/or translators who made it to establish the event of dialogue with individuals from other cultures, with different experiences of the world, and different intentions, that in the question – answer – question dialectics produced a synthesis of knowledge, to start the endless dialectic movement of understanding.

The following example consists on one general analysis, given that the theme is part of a research in progress for a future publication. This case appears relevant for it can reflect the manifestation of the dialogic functions or purposes mentioned above. This translation is a somewhat reformulation of the work *Civil Disobedience* written by H. D. Thoreau[14]. Here the author/translator Fernando Gonzalez[15] reproduces the style and ideas portrayed on how behaviour, expectations and actions vary according to social class, group needs and education. It is his graduation dissertation entitled *El derecho a no obedecer*.

Fernando Gonzalez was a controversial thinker, committed writer, public servant, and a diplomat. He was born in Envigado in the province of Antioquia - Colombia. His early education and instruction was guided by religious institutions, but later his philosophical readings influenced his thoughts, making him become very critical to the moral principles he had learned. Although his production is very prolific, it has been defined as non-systematic and contradictory. Nevertheless, well-known intellectuals in South America like Gabriela Mistral and Ernesto Cardenal acknowledged the deepness and enlightenment of his ideas.

After being expelled from a Catholic School, Gonzalez retired from academic life for three years, when he wrote his first book. After this period, he went back to school and some years later he graduated as a lawyer at Universidad de Antioquia. For his

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[14] First published under the title *Resistance to Civil Government* in 1849.
[15] Fernando Gonzalez Ochoa. 1895 – 1964. See biography and works : http://www.otraparte.org/vida/biografia.html Accessed April 30th 2012.

graduation dissertation, he read Thoreau's work *Civil Disobedience,* and inspired by this, he wrote his own essay.   After a first denial and censorship by part of the university authorities, the author/translator was required to make some adjustments, including the title. The evaluators considered that the work was limited to transcription, and that the student presented others' works and ideas as his own. Actually, the evaluators were wrong. From the analysis, it is clear that both texts are different: length, style, context, participants are all different. So, one question could be asked: why is this text considered a translation?

The graduation dissertation also known as *Una tesis* is similar to Thoreau's work in the following: 1) Style:   in both cases reflections are presented as statements and propositions.   2) Conceptions: these propositions are addressed to civil society, understanding by "civil" the self capacity of the individual to be just, conscious and honest with no need to depend on the decisions of a government body or a political majority. As well, both author and translator/author, make reference to the notion *obedience.*   In Thoreau's case, the expression "Right to civil disobedience", and Gonzalez presents it as "Derecho a no obedecer".

The premises presented by Thoreau were the result of the analysis he made of the United States laws and how civil society might break or follow those laws. Literally, there are passages where he urges citizens to contradict some laws under certain conditions, following interesting and advanced reflections on ethics and rights; i.e., Statement 5 in Part 2 of his work. His book has three parts, each with 13 to 16 statements. In general terms, there is an evident political position of resistance towards government measures and liability such as slavery and interventionism.

On the other hand, Gonzalez's dissertation is a book presented in eighteen sections, with different propositions. Contrary to Thoreau, Gonzalez made a more philosophical analysis.  His propositions had a descriptive style on the way institutions and government used to work in Colombia and how this behaviour was affecting development in both practical and political conditions; and his conclusions did not include direct calls on disobedience.

Nevertheless, when this work is compared to Thoreau's, it is easy to depict the dialectic movement question-answer performed in that dialogue. Answers on the "screening function" of context can be seen: on one side, Mexico's war and an American interventionism; on the other side, Colombia and the very influential power and constraints exerted by the Catholic Church. The identity of the authors is different as well.  While Thoreau was a naturalist, anti-war activist, and tax resister; Gonzalez was a development defender, who believed that catholic morality was contrary to progress and education. It is clear that Thoreau addresses ordinary citizens and appeals to common sense and disobedience for changing unpopular and undemocratic regulations.  Fernando Gonzalez, for his part, is very sceptical about common sense and ordinary people; he does not believe in social change, but in individual changes.

However, when translating the beliefs, commitments and ideas of one transcendental American thinker, he wanted that local ideas had the chance to learn something from universal thought.

**Conclusion**

There are several conclusions resulting from the text. 1) It is possible to tackle diverse philosophical issues in the realm of Translation Studies, such as hermeneutics, ethics, structuralism, and epistemology. Regarding epistemology, the translator and the Translation Studies scholar should always have a point of enunciation (Tymoczko, 2007:17).

2) With the awareness of the epistemological concerns that affect knowledge today, for example the world experience of the speaker, the time and place of the utterance, Social Sciences scholars can engage on humanistic endeavours that allow the exteriorization of many internal impressions, beliefs and intentions. This fact could contribute to multicultural aspects of society today, such as the recognition of difference.

3) Keeping static, inflexible positions might represent an obstacle for the development of the discipline. In the second half of the 20th Century, Social Sciences realize that paradigms of research become less rigid and this conveys a more humanistic emphasis to the practice.

4) A translation analysis can be done based on the principles of *meaning* learned in this article: the dialectics particular-universal, the self-reference movement of the speech event, the utterer's intentionality, the temporary character of the utterance, and the dialogical essence.

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