

Traduire C'est Trahir – Peut-être

Ricœur and Derrida on the (In)Fidelity of Translation

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Abstract:

Paul Ricœur and Jacques Derrida agree that translation is a tensive activity oscillating between the possible and the impossible with reference to the transposition of meaning among diverse systems of discourse. Both acknowledge that risk, alterity, and plurality accompany every attempt at paraphrasing language "in other words." Consequently, their positions adhere to the traditional adage that "the translator is a traitor," precisely because something is always lost in the semantic transfer. Yet, Derrida notes an important disagreement between their respective approaches to translation and accuses Ricœur of harboring a nostalgia for unitive meaning and of promoting the possibility of a transcendental signified that could produce a "pure" translation. In this essay, I critique Derrida's interpretation of Ricœur specifically by examining their individual interpretations of the Tower of Babel myth. I argue that Ricœur's theory of Babel as a non-punitive celebration of diversity and the open play of meaning "out-deconstructs" Derrida's own notion of dissemination.

Keywords: Babel, Deconstruction, Translation, Polysemy, Hospitality.

Résumé:

Paul Ricœur et Jacques Derrida s'accordent à considérer la traduction comme une activité tensionnelle oscillant entre le possible et l'impossible dans sa tâche de transposition du sens entre divers systèmes de discours. Tous deux reconnaissent que le risque, l'altérité et la pluralité accompagnent chaque tentative pour paraphraser le langage "dans d'autres mots." C'est pourquoi leurs positions souscrivent à l'adage traditionnel selon lequel "le traducteur est un traître," précisément parce que quelque chose est toujours perdu dans le transfert sémantique. Derrida souligne cependant un important désaccord entre leurs conceptions respectives de la traduction dans la mesure où il accuse Ricœur d'entretenir une nostalgie à l'égard d'un sens unitaire et de défendre la possibilité d'un signifié transcendantal susceptible de produire une "pure" traduction. Dans cet essai, je critique l'interprétation derridienne de Ricœur en examinant spécialement les interprétations personnelles que les deux philosophes donnent du mythe de la Tour de Babel. Je défends la thèse selon laquelle la conception ricœurienne de Babel comme célébration non-punitive de la diversité et du jeu ouvert du sens déconstruit de l'extérieur la notion de dissémination propre à Derrida.

Mots-clés: Babel, déconstruction, traduction, polysémie, hospitalité.

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"The translator is a traitor... perhaps." That is how one may translate this essay's title into English. Of course, the traditional phrase that lies behind this title excludes the addition of the "*peut-être*," an addition that reduces the indictment of discursive treason brought against anyone so bold as to claim the capability of adequately transferring meaning from one language to another. Since a certain incommensurability obtains among the various linguistic systems, an absolutely precise transposition of meaning without remainder appears to be an impossibility. One must translate inter-lingually, then, always risking the inevitability of omission. In other words – a phrase that interestingly enough denotes *intra*-lingual translation – one may *perhaps* translate a text. One can never be certain as to whether an adequate translation has been achieved or whether one may need to re-translate in order, perhaps, to create a more rigorous repetition of the original meaning.¹ This recognition of omission grounds the potentiality of betrayal noted in the titular saying. The translator is a traitor primarily because one can never be exclusively loyal to the original language. How loyal one remains is ambiguous; consequently, one may perhaps betray an original text or perhaps not. One may be more or less faithful in translating meaning, which means that a trustworthy translation is always contaminated with a functional paraphrastic "perhaps."

Given a certain reading of Paul Ricœur's and Jacques Derrida's philosophies of translation, one may well add the palliative "perhaps" to the saying in order to do justice to the reality of the systemic ambiguity and the tensive reciprocity that obtain within their various paralogies of translating the untranslatable. Both theorists insist that the inevitability of translation never escapes the impossibility of realizing a loyal rendering of the original. Ricœur's notion of "plurivocity" and Derrida's non-conceptual concept of "*différance*" express that meaning remains in flux, always caught in a semantic *kinesis* that never reaches the *stasis* of a decidedly specific inter-lingual "transference-without-remainder." Furthermore, both also agree that univocal meaning can never characterize any singular language, that is to say, that even intra-lingual translation fails to achieve the transparency of a linguistic homogeneity. In other words, in their differing ways, both philosophers argue for a compulsory paradox of paraphrase.

Although agreeing at several points about the complexity of translation, about how one can never ignore the diversity of discourses, and about the disconnection within the diversity that preempts an absolute attestation of semantic clarity, Ricœur and Derrida do, nevertheless, differ in their evaluations of the untranslatability of translation. One such difference, which will function as the focus of this essay, concerns their various interpretations of the positive and/or negative context within which linguistic heterogeneity demands constant translation. These various interpretations actually converge at the point of their disparate readings of the provocative Tower of Babel narrative in Genesis, the narrative that attempts to explain the

dissemination and confusion of human languages and, consequently, that serves as an etiology for the necessity of translation.

Surprisingly, Derrida appears to be quite comfortable with a more traditional perspective on the etiological tale, one taken by Walter Benjamin, for example, whose essay on translation figures so significantly in Derrida's reading. Without too much overt criticism, Derrida adopts the usual idiom of divine condemnation and concludes that the necessity for translation results from a punitive act of God's judgment. Linguistic multiplicity ensues from the giving of the divine name, which, in turn, disrupts the purity of a single mode of communication. Translation, therefore, transpires because of the "trespass of the sign,"² something of a postlapsarian social and linguistic distancing that expresses God's chastisement of humanity. Whereas the plurality of languages may be considered a positive expression of a beneficial heterology, it remains, nonetheless, a divine response to the culpability of disobedience, although, again, one might qualify it as a *felix culpa*, a happy guilt.

Ricœur, on the other hand, does not consider the Babel story to be a retaliatory text but another indication of the creative differentiation that should not be understood as a postlapsarian loss of discursive purity. On the contrary, for him, God's "confusion" of languages into a multiplicity of expressions should be interpreted as a principle of plenitude that exempts plurivocity and polysemy from any need for redemption. For Ricœur, therefore, the *felix culpa* is an inappropriate characterization and should be replaced with *felix sine culpa*. There is no *culpa*! He insists that alterity does not come as a loss of an original homogeneity; it is itself an originary affirmation of the extravagance of plurality. Indeed, he argues that translation signifies the reality of "linguistic hospitality," the possibility of engaging the other *as* other through an appreciation of diversified discourses. Although Derrida indicts Ricœur as an adherent to the false hope of univocal meaning and truth through his putative acceptance of the possibility of equivalent translations, I argue that just the opposite is true – that Ricœur may be more "deconstructive" than Derrida in his primary affirmation of the risk of semantic non-closure that consistently haunts translation.

Translation as Transgression

One can initiate a reading of Derrida's philosophy of translation by examining a pair of paradoxes that identify a basic economy of the "impossible possibility" systemically inscribed in all language. Derrida claims, with his usual deconstructive playfulness, that an individual *only* speaks one language while simultaneously never speaking *only* one language.³ This "law" of translation, as he calls it, indicates that every monolingualism displays symptoms of the contamination of linguistic polymorphism, both in the sense that every linguistic vocabulary contains the remnants of various foreign semiotics and also in the sense that, within the ersatz homogeneity of a specific language, one inevitably discovers hetero-lingual aspects that demand the infinite play of hermeneutics.⁴ The paralogy of mono-poly-lingualism leads logically to the second apparently illogical polarity: specifically, that *nothing* is genuinely untranslatable, although *everything* is untranslatable.⁵ Derrida confesses that he has no trouble maintaining the tension between universal translatability and universal untranslatability, given that every text not only allows but demands the iteration of re-expression, whether by translation or interpretation, while concurrently prohibiting any transparent or precisely equivalent countersignature.⁶ Texts,

too, never communicate in only one language; however, languages with proper names, foreign phrases, or poetic idioms make speaking a second language and, *a fortiori*, translating that language extremely difficult, if not impossible.⁷ He insists that this implicit impossibility of a “pure” translation should not be shocking to anyone, since were we genuinely honest with ourselves and others, we would confirm that “any given translation, whether the best or the worst, actually stands between the two, between absolute relevance, the most appropriate, adequate, univocal transparency, and the most aberrant and opaque irrelevance.”⁸

Derrida goes on to address explicitly the pervasive predisposition to minimize the paradoxical uncertainty associated with translation, claiming that such a predisposition actually discloses the ontotheological, logocentric prejudices that have long plagued western metaphysics. The desire for a “pure” translation that exhaustively re-inscribes an original text into an equivalent “repetition” conspicuously reveals the desire for a transcendental signified, for a univocity of meaning, and for the “theological” aspiration of totalization.⁹ He illustrates this “theology of translation” with Schelling’s conjecture that all knowledge begins from an “*originary unity*,” which he associates with the “*Urwissen* of God,” that is, the foundationalism of absolute knowledge.¹⁰ Derrida, therefore, rejects the most “relevant translation” – conventionally considered to be “the transfer of an intact signified through the inconsequential vehicle of any signifier whatsoever” – as the *least* relevant possible, since it is, to be sure, an impossible expression of an assumed originary meaning.¹¹

Of course, Derrida has consistently recognized that the erotic drive for the purity of language and the closure of certainty accounts for what he calls the “very passage into philosophy” – a passage that for him ensues directly from a significant exemplar of how the profusion of meaning makes translation problematic. For example, Derrida extensively investigates how exactly one might translate the Platonic concept of “*pharmakon*,” that decisive term that Socrates uses to dismiss textuality as an impure surrogate of orality. The word may contrarily mean “poison” or “remedy,” a negative or a positive, something to be avoided or something to be desired.¹² Such an enigma of translation most noticeably marks the threshold into philosophy, because philosophy, as the “thesis of translatability,” has not been preoccupied with translation as a hermeneutical issue struggling with the ambiguities of interpretation but actually with translation as the transference of univocal meaning or the hegemonic control of “plurivocality.”¹³ Yet, such a desire for an intact “kernel” of meaning, of a signified that can transcend all signifiers without remainder, is precisely what deconstruction constantly calls into question with its emphases on textuality and *différance* and what Derrida yearns to disrupt with his perplexing paradoxes of translation.¹⁴ As a matter of fact, he designates a consistent incredulity toward the “motif of ‘purity’” as the “first impulse” of deconstruction.¹⁵

Derrida contends that all of the pertinent issues relating to the two legislating paradoxes of translation coalesce in the provocative narrative of the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11. He refers to this text as an “epigraph for all discussions of translation,” since it inculcates the topics of pure language, theology of translation, the reality of non-totalization, and the possibility of translation as a linguistic soteriology.¹⁶ The myth also establishes the ambiguity that exists not only inter-lingually but also intra-lingually, thereby establishing the ubiquity of the “Babelian motif,” the inescapable impurity of semantic imprecision, and the inexorable necessity for the untranslatable translation of the poetic. He acknowledges that the Babelian motif insinuates a difference that operates within the structures of a single discourse without the necessity to engage another

foreign language. The plurivocity of meanings inherent within any linguistic system “separates translation from itself [and] separates translatability within one and the same language.” He refers to this plurivocity as the product of a hereditary hospitality that every language has for the differences that reside within itself.¹⁷ In other words, Derrida connects the Babelian motif with the potentiality indigenous to every language that allows for an iteration of any statement “in other words” (*en d'autres mots*) the indexical phrase noted above as a signal of intra-lingual translation.¹⁸ Moreover, within a single discourse, the Babelian motif attempts to account for the necessity of figuration and tropes as semantic generators of new meaning. Consequently, it serves as “the myth of the origin of myth, the metaphor of metaphor, the narrative of narrative, the translation of translation.”¹⁹ As a result, the Babelian motif addresses both the inter- and intra-lingual impossible possibility of translation, as well as the deconstructive dynamic at work in any pretense to complete or finalize a formal structure or coherent construct, whether linguistic, cultural, theological, or philosophical.²⁰

What is most fascinating for Derrida about this etiology of linguistic multiplicity is how it connects the confusion of language with the divine punishment of the Shemites (the people whose name (*shem*) means “name” or “lip” in Hebrew), thereby identifying the confusion as an overtly punitive act perpetrated against a sinful humanity by a jealous and wrathful deity.²¹ Derrida emphasizes that, ironically, the linguistic “confusion” that results from the divine sanctions actually ensues from God’s judgment meted out as a gift; that is to say, God expresses God’s holy wrath by *giving* the people a donation, specifically endowing them with the divine name, by pronouncing over them the name of God as “father” – Babel as *ba-bel*, as in *abba-baal*, “father God.”²² Of course, Derrida indicates that the biblical text “translates” the gift of the divine name, “Babel,” not as “father God,” but as “confusion.” Doing so, however, ironically results in a confusing translation, since the double bind of the gift requires the Shemites both to translate the divine name and to recognize the impossibility of translating the divine name. God confuses their language in such a manner that they must now translate inter-lingually, beginning with the divine name. Yet, the divine name preempts translation, first, because it is a proper name and not merely a common noun and, second, because the name itself “signifies ambiguity [and] confusion.”²³

Through the gift of the divine patriarchal name, God confuses the Shemites’ singular language into a plurivocity, puts a halt to the construction of the tower that symbolizes the arrogance of their “colonial violence” and “linguistic imperialism,” and then scatters them abroad into fragmented cultures according to the new discursive plurality.²⁴ One might say, therefore, that the patronymic gift of the sign of the “father” provokes the matronymic multiplicity of the various and diverse “mother tongues.” These acts of divine vengeance center on the equivocation, the impossible necessity, and the retribution that require culpable human beings to translate the divine name, which, again, according to his good deconstructive apophaticism, Derrida disputes can ever genuinely be translated. Consequently, he testifies that God condemns the Shemites to the Sisyphean task of translating the untranslatable without ever achieving the transparency or univocity of a singular meaning, or the security of a pure language, or the final closure of the absolute knowledge of a transcendental signified.

Now, granted, throughout his corpus, Derrida has consistently insisted that he does not wish to traffic in the ideals of linguistic purity. Furthermore, he also consistently rejects any interpretation of language as postlapsarian, as the results of an original sin that corrupted clear

and distinct ideas and disrupted the intimacy of signifier and signified. In point of fact, he categorically confesses that, in his work, he has “never incorporated the theme of prelapsarian writing that would have fallen, through I know not what original sin, into the debased and degraded field of history.”²⁵ As stated above, there is for him no “trespass of the sign,” no nostalgia for a lost originary unity of meaning, nor any messianic expectation for the final assimilation of shattered semiotics. The notion that “the sign is always a sign of the Fall” is specifically idiosyncratic to an ontotheological faith in the totalization of meaning. Indeed, Derrida claims conclusively that, in the Tower of Babel myth, linguistic plurality results in an irreconcilable alterity in which plurality remains “bottomless and is not lived as negativity, with any nostalgia for lost unity.”²⁶ He simply refuses to profess any potential salvation or restoration after Babel, denying that the promise inherent in all language – a promise that might well be a motivating force in all translation – ever genuinely reaches an eschatological unity of hermeneutical reconciliation. Although one cannot open one’s mouth to speak or pick up one’s pen to write without inevitably activating the performative promise that energizes every speech act, the promised language “to come” never “delivers any messianic or eschatological *content* here.”²⁷

Nevertheless, Derrida does write explicitly of “the promise of the reconciliation of tongues,” actually announcing the “messianic character of translation.” Although remaining an asymptotic process without any programmable denouement, the performative promise of translation offers a proleptic glimpse of “the coming shape of a possible reconciliation among languages.”²⁸ Apparently, therefore, Derrida does consistently play the “sin” language game, especially with reference to the Babel narrative, and connects the ambiguities of translation with divine wrath, divine judgment, and with a postlapsarian context that never quite escapes the notion of a pure language as either an Edenic reality now lost or as a messianic kingdom of univocity yet to come. Geoffrey Bennington apparently confirms this Derridean predilection toward interpreting the Babel myth as a narrative of divine retribution. In addressing Derrida’s dismissal of a perfect translation, he writes, “In this milieu of relative confusion, the result of a confused translation of the name of God, we are *condemned* [emphasis mine] not to total incomprehension, but to a work of translation which will never be accomplished.”²⁹ Likewise, Elisabeth Loevlie certainly reads Derrida as associating translation with the fall of language and the alienation of the sacred when she writes that “the potential of translation according to Derrida and Benjamin is repeatedly to remind us of the *fallen nature of language* [emphasis mine] and thereby [to] inspire us to discover its sacred potential.”³⁰ As a result of his use of postlapsarian idioms, Derrida’s semantics of non-totalization, linguistic plurivocity, the asymptotic nature of absolute knowledge, and the semiotic/semantic play of dissemination and *différance* appear to betray both a certain nostalgia for a lost linguistic purity and also an eschatological longing for plurality to be subordinated to singularity as the redemptive sign that the Shemites’ sins have finally been forgiven.

Translation as Negotiation

Derrida is not particularly sanguine about the semiotic surplus of polysemy; nevertheless, he does admit that it “represents progress in relationship to the linearity of... monothematic writing or reading.” That admission acknowledges, to a point, that polysemy functionally tracks the dynamics of dissemination and *différance* as critical of any extant

homogeneous and univocal meaning. Notwithstanding this admission, however, he also reproaches those who emphasize polysemy for their functional disingenuousness whereby they apparently endorse the plurality and heterogeneity of language, but always within a broader context of the “unitary resumption of meaning... within the horizon of... a teleological and totalizing dialectics that at a given moment, however far off, must permit the reassemblage of the totality of a text into the truth of its meaning.”³¹ In other words, Derrida suspects that polysemy tends to disguise an eschatological hope that the sin of linguistic fragmentation will one day end in the restoration of a pure semiotics. Strangely enough, he explicitly mentions Ricœur in the context of such deceptive polysemic confusion. Ricœur represents, for Derrida, one of those who undoubtedly interprets translation as the result of an original semantic sin, a sin that can be reconciled eventually in a process similar to Hegel’s dialectical subsumption of the negative by which absolute meaning may be achieved and the play of signifiers may be concluded through a *via negativa* that dialectically affirms a transcendental signified.³²

I believe, on the contrary, that Ricœur unequivocally and assiduously avoids the dissimulation of transparent translation and the ontotheological myth of the redemption of dissemination. Indeed, I contend that Ricœur shares with Derrida the idea that final unitive meaning remains always “to come” as a hermeneutical event of the absolute future, as restrained in the tension of the tense of the “will have been” – a “will have been” that will never be. Furthermore, I also contend that Ricœur may genuinely have a more “deconstructive” appreciation for linguistic plurality and the resulting positive necessity for translation than does Derrida. He not only agrees with Derrida in rejecting any theory of pure language as either prelapsarian or eschatological but also goes even farther by refusing to play the language game in which translation and interpretation are debts incurred through acts of linguistic iniquity.³³

As does Derrida, so, too, Ricœur contextualizes his philosophy of translation within the milieu of paradox, actually of three paradoxes. First, following Franz Rosenzweig, Ricœur declares that translation requires that one serve two masters simultaneously, the foreign author and the appropriating reader.³⁴ This bipolar accountability of attempting to “bring the reader to the author [or] the author to the reader” establishes what Derrida would call a “negotiation” out of which precipitates an appreciation of alterity and difference, not only with reference to discourse, but also with reference to sociological and ethical issues of compromise and community.³⁵ Derrida notes that “negotiation” etymologically signifies “un-leisure” or “dis-ease” (*neg-otium*). It references, therefore, a constant movement among several positions, a reciprocal shuttling between multiple stations without the stasis of inertia. Negotiating for Derrida means “no thesis, no position, no theme, no station, no substance, no stability, [and] a perpetual suspension”; consequently, negotiation is rather autotelic. It does not aim at stilling the flux of conflicting interpretations by achieving the equilibrium of a definitive and final meaning; on the contrary, the purpose of negotiation is to ensure the continuation of the asymptotic mobility. Consequently, genuine negotiation only engages “the nonnegotiable in negotiation.”³⁶ Perhaps one could identify Derrida’s interpretation of the shuttling to and fro of negotiation with Ricœur’s more poetic image that “throughout the world sentences flutter between men like elusive butterflies.”³⁷

One may certainly transfer Derrida’s notion of negotiable “shuttling” to Ricœur’s first paradox of the double responsibility translation maintains to both author and reader. This responsibility discloses that the paradigm of translation cannot escape the obligation of justice.

Ricœur testifies that “[t]o translate is to do justice to a foreign intelligence” and to admit with humility that “[y]our language is as good as mine.” Such is, for him, “the formula for recognized diversity.”³⁸ He insists that the translator can never escape the tension of this bifurcated loyalty to the different and to the same, certainly not by pretending that some pure, transparent translation could be realized, which would adequately transfer objective meaning from one language system into another. In point of fact, this restriction indicates the second of Ricœur’s paradoxes, namely, that “a good translation can aim only at a supposed equivalence that is not founded on a demonstrable identity of meaning. An equivalence without identity.”³⁹ To be sure, he does not consider this “non-identical” equivalence that translation hopes to achieve to be a cypher for any presumed “objective” transliteration of an ideal signified. As Richard Kearney expresses it, Ricœur attests to the necessity of the translator’s renunciation of any “dream of a return to some adamantine logos of pure correspondences.”⁴⁰ Such a theory, Ricœur insists, would, indeed, require the “purity” of a “third text,” something of a meta-text that would exist beyond the boundaries of the original and the target language. Without such a meta-textual criterion, how could one possibly calibrate whether a translation was adequate or valid?

Here again, in the second paradox, Ricœur clearly denies that any univocal meaning exists that can “save” the pure quality of the signified from the impure fragmentation of the various signifiers. At this point, he adopts a strategy similar to his reading of metaphor, which in itself is another variant of translation, given that *meta-pherein* functions according to the efficacy of discursive transference, carrying linguistic sense across from one semantic field to another. He explains metaphor as a “semantic impertinence” or “semantic innovation” that actually creates new meaning.⁴¹ Likewise, he argues that translational equivalence is not so much discovered as created, the equivalence being a goal of the translating process itself. Equivalence is not a presupposition, therefore, but a production or invention, what Ricœur calls the “constructing of comparables.”⁴² This invention of correspondence discloses the “grandeur of translation [and the] risk of translation: creative betrayal of the original, equally creative appropriation by the reception language.”⁴³ At this specific point, Ricœur’s philosophy of translation syncs yet again with Derrida’s, since the latter also argues that translation transforms both the source language as well as the target language. Translation, therefore, promises “a regulated transformation of one language by another, of one text by another.”⁴⁴

The above notion of “betrayal” connects directly with Ricœur’s third paradox, a paradox that he concludes operates as both the *terminus a quo* and *terminus ad quem* of translation, as well as being a paradox shared directly with Derrida. That paradox is the tension between the translatable and the untranslatable.⁴⁵ Ricœur professes that there simply is translation, *il y a la traduction*.⁴⁶ He argues that “translation belongs to the history of reading”;⁴⁷ therefore, in some manner, all texts demand translation and re-translation, because all texts open themselves “to an unlimited series of readings.”⁴⁸ Yet, in the midst of this proclivity to translation, there lurks the specter of the untranslatable. Discourse is haunted by this specter in two forms. First, there is the initial untranslatability of the plurality of languages, the threat that linguistic diversity might indicate a heterogeneity so fundamental to discourse that translation is prohibited *a priori*.⁴⁹ Second, there is the phantom of the secret or of the mystery forever possessing the body of any text, the “most entrenched incommunicable” that cannot be repeated.⁵⁰ With the untranslatability of the secret, Ricœur transfers alterity from the heteronomous Other beyond the self to the autonomous Other that indicates a fundamental strangeness inherent within the self – oneself *as*

another. This tension between the “inexorable plurality” of the foreign and the “impenetrable solitude” of the self-same results in translation as the “remedy for plurality in a world of dispersion and confusion.”⁵¹ Still, the therapeutic quality of translation does not lead to singularity or transcendental closure, since translation itself cannot escape a systemic pluralism. There is one human race only because comparables of meaning may be invented, homeomorphic connections may transfer among the plurality of discourses, and negotiations may continue among the incommensurable language games.⁵² Yet, again, a beneficial aspect of translation as making the “incomparable comparable” is that it allows individuals to understand a world other than their own and to accede to the reality that one’s language is simply “one among many.” Doing so empowers compromise, which, in turn, may lead ethically to the “common good.”⁵³

Although the third paradox figures significantly in Ricœur’s work, he confesses a dissatisfaction with it and a desire to move beyond it to a different polarity of concepts. Instead of the translatable and untranslatable, which he finds too speculative, he wishes to speak of faithfulness and betrayal. Does the translator remain faithful to the original text or become a traitor, betraying the original text through the arrogance of reiteration? In turn, is the arrogance of translational reiteration exacerbated by the reiteration of reiteration, that is, by the inevitability that no translation is apodictically a singular and unique attempt to transfer meaning from discourse to discourse? In other words – always, *en d’autres mots!* – Ricœur identifies the desire to translate as most conspicuously revealed in the possibility of retranslating, in the recognition that the surplus of meaning presumed to be in any text requires the undetermined repetition of plausible translations.⁵⁴ In this sense, the “betrayal” of translation that ensues from the failure to convert meaning from one language to another without remainder actually constitutes a certain fidelity to the original through a re-commitment to the “indefatigable work of translation” whereby alterity and difference are celebrated through the diversity of the pluralism of paraphrase.⁵⁵ Here again, one may well reconfirm the *peut-être* innate in the translation process – the translator is “perhaps” a traitor; the betrayal is “perhaps” not so treasonous.

Ricœur’s replacement polarity of faithfulness and betrayal strengthens his connection to Derrida, who agrees that translation implies “an oath of fidelity to a given original,” albeit an oath vulnerable to “treason or perjury,” that is, to the potentiality of betrayal.⁵⁶ But for Ricœur, this polarity better expresses the absence of the pure “third” text referenced above as a guarantor of univocal meaning and also better accounts for the first paradox of correlating author and reader. Consequently, it enables him to engage the *ethos* of translation by proposing the somewhat “redemptive” dynamic of “linguistic hospitality.”⁵⁷ With this phrase, Ricœur summarizes the ethical dynamics that emanate from translation as a paradigm for mutual recognition, for cultural *rapprochement*, and for the promise of a communicable common good. Kearney terms this socio-ethical application of translation the “ontological paradigm” and sets it over against the “linguistic paradigm” that emphasizes both inter- and intra-lingual translation.⁵⁸ Linguistic hospitality, however, should not be interpreted, that is, translated, into a different type of grace than the ethical graciousness that eventuates in the taking of “responsibility, in imagination and in sympathy, for the story of the other, through the life narratives which concern that other.”⁵⁹ The grace of linguistic hospitality offers no “redemption” of translation that would repudiate, in any way, the impossibility of an anamnesis recovering a prelapsarian linguistic purity, “the idea of a haunting of the past,”⁶⁰ or of an eschatological aspiration for a reconciled reunification of discourse. For Ricœur, the “translator’s task” requires a “work of mourning,” the

“sober” forsaking of “the ideal of the perfect translation.”⁶¹ In doing so, the translator can live contentedly with the “agreed deficiency” of never resolving the first paradox – that is, adequately serving the two masters of author and reader.⁶² Once a translator accedes to the “impassible difference of the peculiar and the foreign,” s/he progresses through an entelechy marked by polysemy, ambiguity, and plurivocity toward a happiness of translation, specifically, a linguistic happiness directly affiliated with linguistic hospitality.⁶³

Pace Derrida, Ricœur’s emphases on polysemy, ambiguity, and plurivocity are not specimens of a dialectics of totalization, nor is his emphasis on linguistic hospitality a summons to univocity or homogeneity. On the contrary, he interprets translation in ways remarkably similar to Derrida’s notions of dissemination, *différance*, and the non-closure of the non-originary trace. Yet, going even further, he refuses to translate translation into the punitive symbolism of transgression, retribution, and reconciliation, a translation that Derrida, himself, occasionally incorporates into his philosophy. Ricœur may claim that there is no innocent translation, in the sense of one exempt from the risks of hermeneutics; however, he does not claim that interpretation or translation is ever guilty of a postlapsarian alienation from the singularity of meaning.

The remarkable distinction between Ricœur and Derrida may be clearly noted in the two thinkers’ conclusively contrary readings of the Tower of Babel myth. Whereas Derrida continues to rely on the retaliatory language of divine judgment when deciphering the Babel myth, Ricœur rejects any interpretation of the narrative as revealing a catastrophe of language resulting from divine wrath and retribution. Of course, he does admit that the narrative may give some indirect textual evidence for the validity of such an interpretation. He considers the myth to be “too short and too confused in its literary construction” and, thereby, to be vulnerable to a reading that infers its support of a “regressive movement” signaling “an irremediable linguistic catastrophe.”⁶⁴ He insists, however, that a more critical and close reading of the text will disclose that the myth prosecutes the diversifying of discourses as an innocent, and even gracious, act of divine heterophilia revealing God’s celebration of cosmic extravagance. Following Umberto Eco, he demonstrates how the Babel myth simply continues a *de facto* acceptance of linguistic diversity, which in itself is one example of several that identify heterogeneity as a factual characteristic of creation. The separation of cosmos from chaos in the first creation story, the Adamic myth of the fall as an etiology of humanity’s moral maturation, and even the fratricide of Abel as an indicator of the necessity to develop the “ethical project” of concern for the other attest to originary plurality, difference, and mutability as traits of reality characterized by an “innocence of becoming.”⁶⁵

From the perspective of Ricœur’s non-penal reading of the Babel myth, one might interpret God’s response to the homogeneity of human language and culture as a necessary corrective to an unintended situation created by God Godself. Obviously the Babel story connects directly with the Flood story, a tale that does appear to narrate God’s judgment upon a sinful humanity. Perhaps, therefore, the punitive character of that myth gets transferred contextually over to the Babel legend and that explains the propensity to interpret the latter as divine retribution. Ironically, however, in the Flood chronicle, the text states quite clearly that the disobedient decadence and violence of humanity does not evoke in God attitudes of wrath and vengeance but deep feelings of regret and anguish: “And the Lord was *sorry* that he had made humankind on the earth, and it *grieved* him to his heart” (Gen. 6:6 NRSV, emphasis added). God’s

“blotting out” of sinful humanity, consequently, is not overtly an act of anger but of wounded disappointment. Yet, God’s grief does not blind God to the necessity for grace. Since Noah establishes himself as one who remains committed to God’s original intent for creation, God spares him and his family from destruction. Yet, in that act of grace, God actually creates a set of circumstances that undermines the divine heterophilia that God displays in the original act of creation. In saving only one family, God saves only one culture and one language, thereby intentionally or unintentionally diminishing alterity, difference, and plurality. For that reason, perhaps, God instructs Noah and his family to rectify the collateral damage of the Flood and re-establish the plurality of multiculturalism (Gen. 9:1).

The Babel saga, then, recounts how God’s instructions to diversify were not followed. The descendants of Noah do not “fill the earth” but remain in one place, with one language, constructing one culture. A passive response from God would only result in a *status quo* of monotonous uniformity; accordingly, God intervenes to force the issue, to create the necessity for heterogeneity by “confusing” language in order to impede communicability, so as to compel humanity to return to the pluralism and diversity initially intended by creation. Indeed, one could engage in some intertextuality between the Hebrew and Christian scriptures and note how the account of Pentecost in Acts 2 augments the significance of the Babel story with a public proclamation of divine redemption through the miracle of translation. According to the pericope, every culture present hears the message of divine grace translated into its own idiom. This “realized eschatology” of the Gospel message celebrates the task of translation as the creation of comparables among linguistically diverse and socially distinct communities. As a result, Pentecost is not the “redemption” of Babel, because, following Ricœur’s reading, Babel does not need redeeming. Instead, Pentecost is the Christian re-affirmation of the Hebrew celebration of God’s desire for variation and nonconformity.⁶⁶

I contend that the above reading correlates consistently with Ricœur’s contention that the proliferation of languages and, therefore, the necessity for translation, are the way things ought to be. He stresses that the diversification of language in Babel introduces no condemnation of humanity; instead, it illustrates that the profusion of discourses is just the way things are – no fault, no foul.⁶⁷ As a result, Ricœur demands that the myth be read as manifesting “no recrimination, no lamentation, no accusation.”⁶⁸ Language only exists, consequently, in languages, realizing any “universal [linguistic] potentialities only in systems differentiated on phonological, lexical, syntactic and stylistic levels.” This means that “translation is *de facto* [while] translatability is *de jure*.”⁶⁹ Furthermore, it also means that the Babel motif can never be eradicated, that confusion, risk, and diversity will always mark every event of discourse, and that language does not need redeeming, since it is not in itself transgressive.

Ricœur and a “Derridean” Conclusion

Although deconstruction maintains a consistent suspicion toward polarities, always wary of any implicit metaphysics that might be empowering them, Derrida, nonetheless, finds certain binaries to be rhetorically beneficial. Among those beneficial pairs are two that bear directly on this essay. First, he distinguishes between, on the one hand, “the saddened, negative, nostalgic, guilty, Rousseauistic side” of mourning for the lost presence of an absent origin of precise meaning and, on the other, the Nietzschean alternative of the “affirmation of a world of signs

without fault, without truth and without origin which is offered to an active interpretation." This distinction leads naturally to a second, the distinction between two interpretations of interpretation. The first "dreams of deciphering a truth or an origin which escapes play and the order of the sign," and the second "affirms play... [and rejects dreaming] of full presence, the reassuring foundation, the origin and the end of play."⁷⁰ Derrida labels the first interpretation of interpretation, the "rabbinic," and the second, the "poetic."⁷¹ Now, according to Steiner, translation and interpretation may well be synonyms, since both concern the transference of meaning in order to realize communication. For him, a translator is an interpreter.⁷² Indeed, Ricœur himself would agree and would also overtly connect translation and interpretation.⁷³ This synonymy, therefore, warrants translating the Derridean taxonomy of interpretation into a taxonomy of translation. From the rabbinical perspective, translation pursues the recovery of some originary unitive meaning or "dreams" of some eschatological essence of linguistic purity. From the poetic perspective, difference and plurality are celebrated, and translation remains the unending play of kinetic meaning.

Given his original indictment of Ricœur's alleged polysemy as a dialectics of totalization, Derrida would position Ricœur's philosophy of translation as rabbinic and not poetic. For him, Ricœur betrays both a Rousseauistic mourning for a lost Edenic Esperanto and a prophetic and rabbinic optimism for a messianic advent of precise meaning. Yet, I have tried to argue through this essay that Ricœur rightly exemplifies the second distinction, that he supports the poetic dynamic of translation, adopting a Nietzschean affirmation of plurality, difference, and uncertainty with reference to the semiotic and semantic play of meaning. Ricœur is on record in numbers of texts overtly consenting to the salutary implications of hermeneutical pluralism, diversity, and indeterminacy. For example, if one considers that ontology may well offer an end to signification, that by finally connecting with Being as the legislating referent for determining the adequation of language one can embrace the definite article and confirm "the" interpretation, "the" truth, or "the" meaning, then Ricœur's position categorically denies the possibility of that embrace. He claims that although "ontology is indeed the promised land for a philosophy that begins with language," we are all "Moses" fated only to "glimpse this land before dying."⁷⁴ Or, consider his reflections on interpretation and testimony, where he confesses that technical proofs of certainty are replaced with the more inexact confirmation of attestation. He concludes his investigation into testimony with the judgment that one must "choose between philosophy of absolute knowledge and the hermeneutics of testimony."⁷⁵ He reiterates a similar sentiment utilizing the concept of "mourning," which figures so significantly in his theory of translation. He writes that "philosophy mourns the loss of absolute knowledge" and must accept the irrevocability of the conflict of interpretations. Once again, he summarizes in a conclusion: "Between absolute knowledge and hermeneutics, it is necessary to choose."⁷⁶ Ricœur has made his choice – there is no access to absolute knowledge, which leaves no alternative other than the risk of hermeneutics. On the basis of his more poetic, Nietzschean approach to language, therefore, he issues the following command: "give up the ideal of the perfect translation."⁷⁷

I must repeat that a careful reading of Ricœur's paradigm of translation indicates that he neither longs for a return to a discursive Eden nor does he prophesy the coming of some semantic messiah who will resolve the equivocity of fallen meaning in a miraculous restoration of absolved and absolute univocity.⁷⁸ Translation cannot immunize itself against the infections of risk, of fragmentation, of plurality, of iteration, or of impossibility. For Ricœur, as for Derrida, then, the

translator must always be something of a traitor but never one who should be condemned as a sinner. Translation negotiates the distance between faithfulness and betrayal, the untranslatable and the translatable, the foreign and the familiar, the secret and the revealed, and the stranger and the friend. Translation remains the innocent task of affirming fidelity to the necessity of finding “other words,” while recognizing that finding those words always results in loss. Such a loss of meaning always ends in betrayal – well, “perhaps.”

- ¹ The distinction between inter- and intra-lingual translation comes from Roman Jakobson, who also adds a third distinction, the inter-semiotic. The first denotes translation between different languages, the most common meaning of translation; the second denotes translation within one language, another way of expressing explanation or clarification; and the third denotes transferring verbal meaning to a non-verbal semiotic system, for example, the use of emojis in emails. See his "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation," in *Theories of Translation: An Anthology of Essays from Dryden to Derrida*, eds. Rainer Schulte and John Biguenet (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 145.
- ² See Kevin Hart's text: *The Trespass of the Sign: Deconstruction, Theology, and Philosophy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989) text for an excellent investigation of this "lapsarian" phrase.
- ³ Jacques Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other or The Prosthesis of Origin*, trans. Patrick Mensah (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 7.
- ⁴ Jacques Derrida, *The Ear of the Other: Otobiography, Transference, Translation*, ed. Christie McDonald. trans. Peggy Kamuf (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988), 100.
- ⁵ Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other*, 56-57.
- ⁶ By "countersigning," Derrida refers to the interpreter's reading of a text in such a way that the author is allowed to speak through the interpretation, which, of necessity, interferes with the author's "voice." In other words, although an author might sign a text indicating that it belongs to her/him, the reader also signs the text created by her/his reading and, therefore, adds a new signature to the genesis of the transformed text. Obviously, the same notion impacts the act of translation. See, for example, Jacques Derrida, *Sovereignities in Question: The Poetics of Paul Celan*, eds. Thomas Dutoit and Outi Pasanen (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 167.
- ⁷ Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other*, 56.
- ⁸ Jacques Derrida, "What is 'Relevant' Translation?" *Critical Inquiry* 2 (Winter, 2001), 179.
- ⁹ See for example, Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 20.
- ¹⁰ Jacques Derrida, "Theology of Translation," in *Eyes of the University: Right to Philosophy 2*, trans. Jan Plug and others (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 67, 71.
- ¹¹ Derrida, "What is 'Relevant' Translation?," 194-95.
- ¹² Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 71-72.
- ¹³ Derrida, *The Ear of the Other*, 140.
- ¹⁴ Derrida, *The Ear of the Other*, 115-16.
- ¹⁵ Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other*, 46.
- ¹⁶ Derrida, *The Ear of the Other*, 100. Derrida remarks that the "history and problematics of translation," at least in Europe, are grounded on scripture, since European languages were "rooted or re-rooted, in

the very event of the Bible's translation" ("Theology of Translation," 64). The Babel myth, therefore, has a double influence on the development of translation theory; it narrates the genesis of the need for translation but is also itself a text with a particular history of translation behind it.

- ¹⁷ Jacques Derrida, *Aporias*, trans. Thomas Dutoit (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 10.
- ¹⁸ Derrida, "What is 'Relevant' Translation?" 182.
- ¹⁹ Jacques Derrida, "Des Tours de Babel" in *Psyche: Inventions of the Other*, vol. 1, eds. Peggy Kamuf and Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 191.
- ²⁰ Derrida, "Des Tours de Babel," 191.
- ²¹ Derrida, "Des Tours de Babel," p. 195; Derrida, *The Ear of the Other*, 101.
- ²² Derrida, "Des Tours de Babel," 192. Craig Bartholomew chides Derrida for using "an obscure French translation" that renders "Babel" as a divine patronym. He reluctantly admits that such a translation is "marginally, marginally possible," while apodictically qualifying it as "completely unacceptable." Derrida's fault lies in his abstracting the story from its "creation, fall, redemption context in the Hebrew Bible and the Christian canon," thereby collapsing "creation and redemption into fall ("Before Babel and After Pentecost: Language, Literature and Biblical Interpretation," in *After Pentecost: Language and Biblical Interpretation*, eds. Craig Bartholomew, Colin Greene, and Karl Möller [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001], 140). In another essay, Bartholomew accuses Derrida of accepting a "common" but questionable interpretation of Babel that identifies the proliferation of languages with divine judgment. He specifies that one should not necessarily identify the "confusion of the lip" with the multiplication of languages, noting that the latter is previously and positively addressed in Gen. 10. In other words, the punishment of Babel is the preemption of communication and not the propagation of natural languages ("Babel and Derrida: Postmodernism, Language and Biblical Interpretation" *Tyndale Bulletin* 49 [1998], 313). The plurality of languages referenced in Gen. 10, by the way, is a specific point raised by Ricœur as he argues for a non-penal interpretation of the Babel myth, an interpretation discussed below.
- ²³ Derrida, *The Ear of the Other*, 102.
- ²⁴ Derrida, "Des Tours de Babel," 199.
- ²⁵ Derrida, *Positions*, 53.
- ²⁶ Derrida, *Dissemination*, 341.
- ²⁷ Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other*, 67-68.
- ²⁸ Derrida, *The Ear of the Other*, 123.
- ²⁹ Geoffrey Bennington, "Derridabase," in Geoffrey Bennington and Jacques Derrida, *Jacques Derrida*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 175.

- ³⁰ Elisabeth M. Loevlie, "God's Invisible Traces: The Sacred in Fallen Language, Translation and Literariness," *Literature and Theology* 23 (December 2009), 449.
- ³¹ Derrida, *Positions*, 45.
- ³² One of Derrida's best readers, John Caputo, supports this negative perspective on Ricœur. He argues that Ricœur's hermeneutical approach parallels Gadamer's in being "a reactionary gesture, an attempt to block off the radicalization of hermeneutics and to turn it back to the fold of metaphysics." The "fold of metaphysics" connotes a naïve belief in a unitive and identifiable meaning that can arrest the flux of signification (*Radical Hermeneutics: Repetition, Deconstruction, and the Hermeneutic Project* [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987], 5).
- ³³ James K. A. Smith does an admirable job of investigating, and critiquing, the traditional theory that the need for interpretation results from the Fall, a fall from "the intelligible to the sensible, from immediacy to mediation, [and] from reading to hermeneutics." See his *The Fall of Interpretation* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 17.
- ³⁴ Paul Ricœur, *On Translation*, trans. Eileen Brennan (New York: Routledge, 2006), 4.
- ³⁵ Paul Ricœur, *Reflections on The Just*, trans. David Pellauer (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), 27.
- ³⁶ Jacques Derrida, *Negotiations: Interventions and Interviews 1971-2001*, ed. Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 11-13.
- ³⁷ Ricœur, *On Translation*, 31.
- ³⁸ Ricœur, *Reflections on The Just*, 31.
- ³⁹ Ricœur, *Reflections on The Just*, 22.
- ⁴⁰ Ricœur, *On Translation*, xvii.
- ⁴¹ Paul Ricœur, *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics II*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and John B. Thompson (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1991), 8-9; Paul Ricœur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, trans. and ed. John B. Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 38-39.
- ⁴² Ricœur, *On Translation*, 35. Gert-Jan van der Heiden also notes the similarity between Ricœur's theory of metaphor and his theory of translation. Van der Heiden notes that, for Ricœur, "the linguistic act of translation, like the act of metaphorizing and emplotment, concerns the invention of an equivalence without identity and a correspondence without adequation" (*The Truth (and Untruth) of Language: Heidegger, Ricœur, and Derrida on Disclosure and Displacement* [Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2010], 216).
- ⁴³ Ricœur, *On Translation*, 37.
- ⁴⁴ Derrida, *The Ear of the Other*, 122; Derrida, *Positions*, 20.

- ⁴⁵ Ricœur, *On Translation*, 30.
- ⁴⁶ Ricœur, *On Translation*, 11.
- ⁴⁷ André LaCocque and Paul Ricœur, *Thinking Biblically: Exegetical and Hermeneutical Studies*, trans. David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 337.
- ⁴⁸ Ricœur, *From Text to Action*, 83, 118. Octavio Paz agrees with Ricœur that the act of reading is a task of translation. He also contends that “translations of translations of translations” are unavoidable, given that no text is genuinely “original” but depends on various transfers of meaning from the nonverbal to the verbal and from one verbal sign to another. Ironically, however, he also indicates that every translation *is* original, since a translation creates a unique and different text. See his “Translation: Literature and Letters,” in *Theories of Translation*, 154, 159.
- ⁴⁹ Ricœur, *On Translation*, 30.
- ⁵⁰ Ricœur, *On Translation*, 5. George Steiner would add that the “secret” or “non-communicable” quality of language may well result from dissimulation and concealment. He claims that the “ability of human beings to misinform modulates through every wavelength from outright lying to silence” (*After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975], 46).
- ⁵¹ Ricœur, *Reflections on The Just*, 28.
- ⁵² Paul Ricœur, “Reflections on a New Ethos for Europe,” in *The Hermeneutics of Action*, ed. Richard Kearney (London: SAGE Publication, 1996), 4.
- ⁵³ Paul Ricœur, *The Course of Recognition*, trans. David Pellauer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 209.
- ⁵⁴ Ricœur, *Reflections on The Just*, 27.
- ⁵⁵ Ricœur, *Reflections on The Just*, 24.
- ⁵⁶ Derrida, “What is ‘Relevant’ Translation?,” 183.
- ⁵⁷ Ricœur, “Reflections on a New Ethos for Europe,” 5; Ricœur, *On Translation*, 22, 28. Of course, one should not think that a philosophy of translation holds no ethical import for Derrida. Lovisa Bergdahl claims that translation is for Derrida “about an ethical encounter with the sacredness of the Other and in this encounter it is *I* who need to move towards the language of the Other” (“Lost in Translation: On the Untranslatable and its Ethical Implication for Religious Pluralism,” *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 43 [2009], 37).
- ⁵⁸ Richard Kearney, “Paul Ricœur and the Hermeneutics of Translation,” *Research in Phenomenology* 37 (2007), 148-52; cf also his introduction to *On Translation*, xii. Scott Davidson defends the position that Ricœur’s paradigm of translation contributes a functional rubric whereby to unify his later work on memory, recognition, justice, and forgiveness. Specifically, he focuses the later topics on social interactions that follow “the guide of the practical dialectic of fidelity and betrayal and thereby sheds

light on not only what gets connected but what gets lost..." ("Ricœur's Later Thought: From Hermeneutics to Translation and Back Again," *Philosophy Today* [Spring 2013], 69; cf. also his "Linguistic Hospitality: The Task of Translation in Ricœur and Levinas," *Analecta Hermeneutica* 4 [2012], 5).

⁵⁹ Ricœur, "Reflections on a New Ethos for Europe," 6-7.

⁶⁰ Paul Ricœur, *Critique and Conviction*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 147.

⁶¹ Ricœur, *On Translation*, 16. Allison Scot-Baumann considers the idea of translational mourning to be "a key element in Ricœur's philosophy of tolerance." Tolerance derives from the "acceptance of imperfection and of limits to success, and a determination to face up to a life without absolutes." See her "Ricœur's Translation Model as a Mutual Labour of Understanding" *Theory, Culture & Society* 27 (2010), 73.

⁶² Ricœur, *On Translation*, 8.

⁶³ Ricœur, *On Translation*, 9-10. Sandy Farquhar and Peter Fitzsimons use the phrase "lost in translation" as the cypher for the socio-ethical implications of linguistic hospitality. They associate the phrase with the intention to remain open to multiplicity and diversity, that is, to a "possible gain in perspective, or inspiration for new possibilities." Being lost in translation, therefore, sustains a "friction between text and culture" that stimulates "future possibilities involving continuing dialogue and ongoing explanation and reinterpretation." See "Lost in Translation: The Power of Language" *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 43 (2011), 653-57.

⁶⁴ Ricœur, *On Translation*, 12.

⁶⁵ Ricœur, *On Translation*, 18-19; Ricœur, *Reflections on The Just*, 26.

⁶⁶ Batholomew contends that Babel "constitutes a (second) fall," involving the "God-given diversity of languages," while Pentecost "signifies the reverse of Babel . . . in which linguistic pluralism celebrates the Messiah" ("Babel and Derrida," 328). According to my interpretation of Ricœur's interpretation of Babel, I am not convinced that Pentecost should be understood as a redemptive "reversal" but, instead, as a messianic affirmation.

⁶⁷ Ricœur, *On Translation*, 33. Domenico Jervolino agrees that the "diversity of languages is not... an insurmountable obstacle or a scandal as opposed to the unity of the *logos*. Rather, translation – or shall we say translatability – is a possibility which is affirmed in principle" ("Reading Patočka, in Search for a Philosophy of Translation," in *Jan Patočka and the Heritage of Phenomenology*, eds. Ivan Chvatík and Erika Abrams [London: Springer, 2011], 127). Indeed, in another article he actually refers to the "blessing of Babel" as an ethical affirmation of the alterity of the other through the positive plurivocity of languages ("Herménutique et traduction. L'autre, l'étranger, l'hôte," *Archives de Philosophie* 63 [2000], 90).

⁶⁸ Ricœur, *On Translation*, 20.

- ⁶⁹ Ricœur, "Reflections on a New Ethos for Europe," 4-5.
- ⁷⁰ Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 292.
- ⁷¹ Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 62.
- ⁷² Steiner, *After Babel*, 28, 414.
- ⁷³ Ricœur, *Thinking Biblically*, 332. Steiner also notes the affiliation between interpretation and translation. He insists that the same transformational operation animating inter-lingual translation informs the intra-lingual process of interpretation (*After Babel*, 28, 414).
- ⁷⁴ Paul Ricœur, *The Conflict of Interpretations*, ed. Don Ihde (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 24.
- ⁷⁵ Paul Ricœur, *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Lewis S Mudge (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 153.
- ⁷⁶ Paul Ricœur, *A Ricœur Reader: Reflection & Imagination*, ed. Mario J. Valdes (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 98.
- ⁷⁷ Ricœur, *On Translation*, 8. Cf. also Domino Jervolino, "Gadamer and Ricœur on the Hermeneutics of Praxis," in *The Hermeneutics of Action*, 71.