

liable to (be put to) death in return for<sup>1</sup> his death, then casting himself down in supplication, he begged him, (saying) 'Because I sinned and killed thee unwittingly, for I did not know that thou art a god, but I counted thee a man, it is granted thee in return for that offence to take all, who will believe in thee, where thou wilt'. Then Jesus, leaving him, took and seized Paul, and revealed to him the purchase price and sent him to preach that we are purchased with a purchase price, and that everyone, who believes in Jesus, has been sold by the just (god) to the good.

This is the beginning of the heresy of Marcion, apart from many other trivialities; and they do not all know this but a few of them do; and they hand on this teaching by (word of) mouth one to another; they say, the stranger has purchased us with a purchase price from the lord of creatures; but how and by what means we are purchased, that they do not all know.

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### THE MEANING OF *FIDUS INTERPRES* IN MEDIEVAL TRANSLATION

BOETHIUS, *In Isagogen Porphyrii, Editio Secunda* (ed. S. Brandt, Corp. Script. Eccles. Latin. 48, p. 135):

... in qua (serie translationis) quidem uereor ne subierim *fidi\* interpretis culpam cum uerbum uerbo* expressum comparatumque reddiderim. Cuius incoepti ratio est, quod in his scriptis in quibus rerum cognitio quaeritur non luculentae orationis lepos sed incorrupta veritas exprimenda est. Quocirca multum profecisse uideor, si philosophiae libris Latina oratione compositis per integerrimae translationis sinceritatem nihil in Graecorum litteris amplius desideretur.

\* *fēdi* C (Monac. 6403, saec. X); *foedi* H m I (Colon. 188, saec. XI) and N (Bamberg. 325, saec. XI); *infidi* F (Colon. 187, saec. XI) and G m I (Paris. 13955, saec. X); *fidi* cett. To these manuscripts mentioned by Brandt is to be added: *fidi* Paris B. Nat. lat. 11129 (saec. XI). (See *Corp. Philos. Medii Aevi. Corp. Aristotel. Catalog. Manuscript.*, ed. Lacombe-Franceschini, 1939, p. 114.) For the value of the manuscripts see Brandt, loc. cit., pp. xxxvii-xxxviii, liv, lvi and note.

John the Scot, Preface to the translation of Dionysius the Areopagite, *De Caelesti Hierarchia* (Migne, P.L. 122, col. 1032):

Sin vero obscuram minusque apertam praedictae interpretationis seriem iudicaverit, videat me interpretem huius operis esse, non expositorem. *Ubi valde pertimesco, ne forte culpam fidi\* interpretis incurram.*

\* *fidi* E (Darmstad., olim Colon. 30, saec. XII) and F (Vatic. 177, saec. XIV); *infidi* cett.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *ἀντί* Mark x. 45, translated also by *φρῶνῶν*.

The dependence of John the Scot's sentence 'ubi valde . . . incurram' on Boethius 'vereor . . .' &c. is obvious. The manuscripts of both writers have the two readings 'fidi' and 'infidi'.

As far as I am aware, this dependence on Boethius has not been observed and these sentences have not yet been explained satisfactorily.<sup>1</sup>

It may be suggested that Boethius in this passage had in mind St. Jerome, *Ep.* 57, 5, 2-5. In this letter Cicero, *De opt. gen. orat.* 13, 14, and 23 is cited; here Cicero writes that his translation of Aeschines and Demosthenes is that of an *orator*, not of an *interpres*. After this quotation St. Jerome continues:

sed et Horatius, uir acutus et doctus, hoc idem in Arte poetica erudito interpreti praecipit:

Nec uerbum uerbo curabis reddere fidus  
Interpres.<sup>2</sup>

St. Jerome shows the complete agreement between Cicero and Horace in their statements, namely, that they prefer a rhetorical translation according to sense to a literal one of the faithful translator.<sup>3</sup> 'Fidus interpres' means, therefore, a translator who translates word for word.

When in spite of this tradition Boethius translates word for word he is afraid that he may be attacked because he has not followed the advice of these weighty authorities. Therefore he starts his preface with the admission that he has committed the fault of the faithful translator. In this sentence he quotes the same words of Horace, *De arte poetica*,<sup>4</sup> which are cited in St. Jerome's *Ep.* mentioned above. Boethius' explanation of 'fidus interpres' is the same as that of St. Jerome.

This interpretation of the term 'fidus interpres' explains not only Boethius' sentence, but also that of John the Scot who, as the occurrence of the word '*culpam fidi interpretis*' shows, takes Horace's words from Boethius.

The quotation of Horace in Boethius and John the Scot thus

<sup>1</sup> Dümmler in his edition of John the Scot's preface (*Mon. Germ. Hist. Ep.* 6, p. 159) suggests reading 'fidei' for 'fidi'. S. Brandt in his edition of Boethius reads 'fidi', and M. Cappuyns, *Jean Scot Érigène, sa vie, son œuvre, sa pensée* (Univ. Cathol. Lovan. ii. 26, 1933), p. 145, following Floss (in Migne, *P.L.* loc. cit.) reads 'infidi'. Brandt, loc. cit., p. xi, and Cappuyns, loc. cit., pass over the difficult words of this sentence.

<sup>2</sup> St. Jerome, *Ep.* 57, 5, 5 (ed. I. Hilberg, Corp. Script. Eccles. Latin. 54); Horace, *De arte poetica*, 133-4.

<sup>3</sup> O. Immisch ('Horazens Epistel über die Dichtkunst', *Philologus*, Supplementband XXIV, Hft. 3, 1932, pp. 105-6) uses the same sentences of Cicero for the explanation of Horace as St. Jerome does. But Immisch is apparently not aware of this coincidence.

<sup>4</sup> Brandt in a note to Boethius's text refers to Horace as Boethius's source.

reveals the long history of the expression 'fidus interpres', and it proves the continuity of thought from Cicero to John the Scot. A more detailed description of the main phases in the development of the theory of translation will show some of the reasons which brought about the establishment of the word-for-word translation. It will also make clear how important St. Jerome's role was for the continuity of the theory of translation and for the change of its practice.

St. Jerome explains the difficulties of the word-for-word method. The equivalents for the words of one language often do not exist in the other and the preservation of the order of words makes the translation sound ridiculous and incoherent.<sup>1</sup> Therefore he prefers to translate the sense and not the words, and maintains that in his own translation the sense is rendered in its entirety, though not the words.<sup>2</sup> He has, however, to modify this theory of translation when rendering the Bible, for every word in it is sacred. The meaning of the sacred text cannot be exhausted; it is like the ocean, inexhaustible and mysterious.<sup>3</sup> This mystery must be preserved in the translation. As the order of words transcends human understanding, a change in the order of words would not only destroy this mystery but it would also endanger the fathomless profundity of the sacred text.<sup>4</sup>

In this passage St. Jerome admits that the word-for-word method preserves details which are lost in a translation according to sense. Because of its great stylistic difficulties, however, only the word of God should be rendered word for word. Yet this translation must have been a great incentive to adopt the same method for other works. To do so meant a departure from St. Jerome's express rule. Therefore a new foundation had to be laid by Boethius who, as far as can be ascertained, was the first to proclaim the principle of word-for-word translation for books which are not sacred.

At the beginning of his translation of Porphyry's *Eisagoge* (translated post A.D. 500)<sup>5</sup> Boethius discusses the reason why he uses the word-for-word method. Referring to St. Jerome's view he expressly states his intention to commit the fault of the 'faithful translator' (= 'fidus interpres' in the meaning given above p. 74). This apparently is his challenge to the traditional condemnation of the word-for-word method. His justification which follows at once deals with the two

<sup>1</sup> *Ep.* 57, 5, 6-8; *Eusebii Pamphili Chronic. Canon.*, ed. J. K. Fotheringham (1923), pp. 1<sup>a</sup>27-2<sup>a</sup>23.

<sup>2</sup> *Ep.* 57, 6, 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Comment. in Abacuc*, ii. 3 (Migne, *P.L.* 25, cols. 1317-18).

<sup>4</sup> *Ep.* 57, 5, 2: ego non solum fateor, sed libera uoce profiteor me in interpretatione Graecorum absque scripturis sanctis, ubi et uerborum ordo mysterium est, non uerbum e uerbo, sed sensum exprimere de sensu.

<sup>5</sup> See Brandt's preface to his edition of Boethius, pp. xxvi-xxix.

points which are raised by St. Jerome in favour of, and in attack against, this method, namely, its exactness and its stylistic difficulty. In a philosophical work like Porphyry's *Eisagoge*, Boethius argues, the subject-matter alone is of importance. His aim is to express the uncorrupted truth of the original work without any regard to a lucid and graceful style. Therefore it is of great importance to render everything contained in the works of Greek philosophy in an irreproachable translation word for word.<sup>1</sup>

This is, indeed, an answer to, and a development of, St. Jerome's theory. It is an answer in its deliberate renunciation of stylistic elegance and rhetoric;<sup>2</sup> it is a development in its application of the word-for-word method to a philosophical work.

With the acceptance of Boethius' view the translator's task can easily be defined: he merely has to render words from one language into another. This method is considered to be the surest safeguard against any alteration of the original thought or the introduction of false or heretical views into the author's work. The translator cannot be blamed for the views expressed in the translation. Thus Dionysius Exiguus (sixth century) in a letter to the presbyter Eugipius concerning his version of Gregory of Nyssa maintains that nobody should think that he agrees with Gregory's views. He merely translates without passing judgement.<sup>3</sup>

The same idea is expressed by John the Scot who in the preface to his translation of St. Maximus' *Ambigua* (translated c. 862-4)<sup>4</sup> writes that if new doctrines are found in his translations of Greek works, these new doctrines should be imputed to the authors but not to him who has 'simply translated' their works.<sup>5</sup>

As has been shown, his sentences in his preface to the translation of Dionysius the Areopagite, *De Caelesti Hierarchia* (translated c. 860-2),<sup>6</sup> concerning the theory of translation are dependent on, and partly borrowed from, Boethius. John the Scot maintains that he is unable to make the original text clearer since he is its translator not its expounder, i.e. he translates word for word. It is this faithfulness

<sup>1</sup> For text see above, *ad init.*

<sup>2</sup> For St. Jerome's aim to discard rhetoric see, e.g., *Ep.* 22, 30, 4; *Translatio Homiliarum Originis in Jeremiam et Ezechielem* (Migne, *P.L.* 25, col. 585A).

<sup>3</sup> Migne, *P.L.* 67, cols. 345-6: *Et quia sunt, ut dixi, aliqua quae possunt merito reprehendi, nullus lector in his meum putet obligatum esse consensum; quia officio translatoris explicui, non censoris iudicio comprobavi.*

<sup>4</sup> For the date see M. Cappuyns, *loc. cit.*, pp. 162-3.

<sup>5</sup> Migne, *P.L.* 122, col. 1196: *In quibus (Graecorum fontibus) si quid incognitae adhuc nobis doctrinae inveniatur, auctoribus ipsis est deputandum quia nemo aliud in hoc opere recte mihi debet tribuere, nisi solummodo simpliciter transtulisse.*

<sup>6</sup> For the date see M. Cappuyns, *loc. cit.*, p. 158.

towards the original work and the strict application of the word-for-word method which forbid any departure from it. Thus 'he incurs the fault of the faithful translator'. It is noteworthy that unlike Boethius John the Scot gives no reasons for using the word-for-word method for his translation. This silence can be explained if John the Scot's view on translation as expressed in his great work *De Divisione Naturae* (written between 862 and 866)<sup>1</sup> is taken into account. In this work John the Scot often comments on the difficulties of rendering composites like *homoousion*, *homoagathon*, *homotheon* into Latin since no appropriate words exist in Latin to express their full meaning. It is, therefore, he points out, necessary to use several Latin words for one of these Greek expressions although such a rendering should not be called a true translation.<sup>2</sup> The method of word-for-word translation having been generally accepted John the Scot has only to explain why he is sometimes forced to depart from its strict application. While Boethius has to defend his use of the word-for-word translation, John the Scot has to give reasons for not being literal enough. This strikingly reveals the development of the word-for-word method in the time between these two authors. It can, therefore, be understood that John the Scot was able to extol the virtues of this method to the detriment of the translation according to sense with its turgid rhetoric and splendour as he does in a poem introducing his version of the *Ambigua* :

Quisquis rhetorico verborum syrmate gaudet,  
 Quaerat grandiloquos, Tullia castra petens ;  
 Ast mihi sat fuerit, si planos carpere sensus  
 Possem tardilocus pragmata sola sequens.  
 Interior virtus sermonum rite tenenda :  
 Verborum bombi fallere saepe solent.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For the date see *ibid.*, p. 189.

<sup>2</sup> *De Divis. Nat.* ii. 23 (Migne, *P.L.* 122, col. 567): Sicut enim Graecian ousian, treis hypostaseis vel tria prosôpa dicunt, id est unam essentiam tres substantias vel personas: ita Romani unam essentiam tres substantias vel personas. In hoc tamen videntur differre quod Graecos mian hypostasin, id est, unam substantiam dicere non reperimus, Latini vero unam substantiam, tres personas frequentissime solent dicere. Graeci dicunt homoousion, homoagathon, homotheon, hoc est unius essentiae, unius bonitatis, unius Deitatis, vel una essentia, una bonitas, una Deitas. Haec autem nomina, quae apud Graecos inseparabilitatem divinae naturae insinuant, in romanum sermonem non facile vertuntur et nullo modo ad purum, ut arbitror; ideoque solus eorum intellectus separatis verbis per periphrasim transfertur, ut eorum solummodo virtus intelligatur, quorum interpretatio de verbo ad verbum non exprimitur. Cf. *ibid.* i. 14, col. 460c. For other examples see Cappuyns, *loc. cit.*, pp. 143-4. (For the words *mian ousian* . . . *tria prosôpa* and their significance cf. St. Augustine, *De Trinitate*, v. 8-9; Migne, *P.L.* 42, cols. 917-18.)

<sup>3</sup> Migne, *P.L.* 122, cols. 1235-6 = L. Traube, *Mon. Germ. Hist. Poet. Lat.* iii. 2, p. 549.

So the word-for-word method of translation became the predominant, if not the only method during the Middle Ages. The medieval translators<sup>1</sup> endeavoured to overcome the difficulties and limitations inherent in this method. Therefore they tried to find a satisfactory solution for the translation of Greek composite terms. But they never altered the principle, and the more closely they followed the original text, the more their Latin style deteriorated. This neglect of the Latin style was one of the reasons which induced the Italian translators of the Quattrocento to use a new principle of translation, that according to sense.

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<sup>1</sup> This study was to have covered the whole period of the Middle Ages. War conditions make it, however, impossible to publish the whole paper.