

## **Dialogue about philosophy in Spanish. 18 April 2014.**

Held at: The Observatory of the Spanish Language and Hispanic Culture in the United States. Harvard University.

On April 18<sup>th</sup>, seven analytic philosophers gathered at Harvard with Susanna Siegel to discuss the life of analytic philosophy today in Spanish. There were two twenty-five minute talks, each followed by a roundtable discussion. The presenters were:

Professor Diana Perez of Buenos Aires, Harvard graduate students Diana Acosta and Patricia Marechal, Professor Josefa Toribio of Barcelona, Professor Jorge Gracia of SUNY Buffalo, Postdoc Laura Pérez of UAM, and Professor Carla Merino of NYU/Arizona State. Each speaker presented in both languages, presenting diverse geographical, political, and practical perspectives. What follows begins with the introduction to the event by the organizer, Professor Susanna Siegel of Harvard. We have collected the texts in both languages of each speaker.

Susanna Siegel, Coordinator.

1. Welcome everyone. We're here to discuss the life of philosophy of Spanish. Our title is "Dialog about philosophy in Spanish", and you'll notice the syntactic ambiguity. Our dialog today will be in Spanish (as well as English – all contributors will be present in both languages), and our topic will also be philosophy in Spanish. This topic has practical, philosophical, and political dimensions. I want to say briefly how these dimensions look from my point of view.

About two years ago, I started giving talks in Spanish in Latin America. I was extremely lucky that Diana Acosta from Harvard and Laura Perez from UAM were willing to help me when I tried to translate my lecture notes. I couldn't have made myself easily understood in Spanish without their help, their philosophical insights, and their generosity. The process of trying to translate my talks, seeing how vastly Diana and Laura improved on my attempts, and then as a result improving my ability to formulate what I had to say philosophically in Spanish has brought into focus for me all three of the dimensions of the topic we're going to discuss today.

2. On the philosophical dimension: I quickly learned that when you translate your work, you cannot hide. You cannot hide the philosophical difficulties. The hardest parts to translate were always the most philosophically problematic parts as well. We often make progress in philosophy when we identify sources of obscurity. Translating a text makes its philosophically difficult parts stick out like a sore thumb.

I also found new examples (new to me) of a familiar fact: that philosophical problems begin with the way they are formulated. Consider the discussions we have

in English about the nature of belief. One of the central debates in this area concerns the relation between ‘on-off’ beliefs and degrees of belief, called ‘credences’. In Spanish, there is no word (yet) that’s analogous to ‘credences’. There’s “creencia”, which you have to use for both things. So if you want to discuss whether there really are two things, how they might be related, how they’re the same or how they differ, and so on, right away you need to select a word to label one of the two things, just as English has ‘belief’ and ‘credence’. Selecting the word creates the need to say what it means – and at that point you are already on the way to suggesting the structure of the phenomenon under discussion. For instance if we settled on “creencia binaria” and “creencia incremental”, we’d be suggesting first (and somewhat misleadingly) that belief has only *two* settings, belief and disbelief; and secondly that these two states are variants of the same type of thing – a creencia. Part of what’s at issue is whether the two things can be interdefined or whether they entirely independent. Linguistic choices alone could never decide that issue. But they make certain philosophical questions seem more salient and natural, and others seem more distant or arcane.

The Harvard Philosophy graduate program, we have a language requirement: graduate students have to pass an exam in which they translate a piece of philosophy from German, French, Latin, or ancient Greek into English. I think we should consider expanding the ways of fulfilling this requirement so that you have to translate a piece of philosophy in English, written by yourself or by someone else, into another language of your choice.

3. On the practical dimension: When I gave my talks in Spanish, I discovered that discussions were much better when the audience wasn’t forced to translate the talk on a topic that might not be familiar with. It was more efficient for me to translate it in advance. If I have to translate on the spot, at least I know my way around the material. If I forced the auditors (especially students) to translate my English in order to think through the material, I’m expecting them to shoulder a big burden. It is better philosophically all around if the speaker is the locus of the translation, not the audience.

4. On the political dimension: Should analytic philosophy be published in Spanish today? Most of the speakers today will address this question. How could this even be a serious question? Gonzalo Rodriguez-Pereya recently published an article defending a serious answer to it, which was that analytic philosophy shouldn’t be published in Spanish. He invoked a mountain of practical advantages to publishing in English rather than Spanish. In my opinion he ignores a separate mountain of different practical advantages to publishing in Spanish. Either way, the question has a significance for Spanish that it would lack for French or German. German and French have a place in the history of western philosophy, and philosophy written originally in these languages has had enormous influence on the tradition that

shapes the field today. I'm told that people working in analytic philosophy in Germany today often consult English translations of Kant, because they're easier to understand. Holding conferences in English in Germany for German-speaking philosophers would not be vexed in a way that holding conferences in English for Spanish-speaking philosophers in Latin America is. Holding analytic philosophy conferences in Spanish establishes and maintains Spanish as a language for analytic philosophy. No such establishment or maintenance is needed for German or French.

Analytic philosophy today has well-known demographic problems. Those problems are arguably artifacts, to some extent, of insular intellectual subcultures in which there isn't enough of a check on the discursive practices and the social patterns that go with them. In part the insularity is due to the fact that philosophical questions are genuinely distinct from many questions in neighboring fields in both the social sciences and the humanities. There are some good reasons for philosophy to be insular. But many of subcultures we find today in analytic philosophy are also insular because they are unduly influenced by dominant social forces. This kind of insularity is harmful and gratuitous. We can open and improve the profession by widening its linguistic horizons.

I'm grateful to the Observatorio, to the Dean of Arts and Humanities Diana Sorensen, and to Paco Moreno-Fernandez and Victoria Whitney of the Instituto Cervantes at Harvard for helping create space for our discussion.

## **Introduccion**

### **Diálogo sobre filosofía en español. 18 Abril 2014.**

#### **Observatorio de la lengua Española y las culturas hispánicas en los Estados Unidos. Harvard University.**

El 18 de Abril, siete filósofos analíticos se juntaron en Harvard con Susanna Siegel para discutir la vida de la filosofía analítica de hoy en español. Había dos charlas bilingües de veinte cinco minutos, y dos mesas redondas con presentaciones más cortas. Los conferenciantes fueron: la Profesora Diana Pérez de la Universidad de Buenos Aires, las estudiantes de postgrado en Harvard, Diana Acosta y Patricia Marechal; la Profesora Josefa Toribio de la Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona; el Profesor Jorge Gracia de la Universidad de Buffalo; la Doctora Laura Pérez de la UAM, y la Profesora Carla Merino de NYU/Northern Arizona. Cada conferenciante hablaba en los dos idiomas. Presentaron perspectivas geográficas, políticas, y prácticas diversas. Los textos que se adjuntan comienzan con la introducción al evento hecha por la organizadora, Profesora Susanna Siegel, de la Universidad de Harvard. Hemos recogido los textos de todos los conferenciantes en los dos idiomas.

Susanna Siegel – Introducción al diálogo sobre filosofía en español. 18 Abril 2014.

1. Bienvenidos. Gracias por venir al Diálogo sobre filosofía en español. Nuestro tema es la filosofía analítica de hoy en español. Este tema tiene una dimensión filosófica, una dimensión práctica, y una dimensión política. Quiero ofrecer, brevemente, mi punto de vista sobre cada una de estas dimensiones.

Hace dos años, empecé a dar clases en español en América Latina. Fui increíblemente afortunada al contar con la ayuda de Diana Acosta, alumna de postgrado en Harvard y la Doctora Laura Pérez, investigadora en la UAM, para preparar mis clases. Sin su ayuda con la traducción, no hubiera podido hacerme entender fácilmente al dar mis charlas en español. En el proceso de traducción, no sólo aprendí cómo Diana y Laura mejoraban con mucho mi primeros intentos, además, como resultado de su ayuda, fui capaz de mejorar la formulación misma de mis ideas filosóficas en español. Este proceso de pulido y clarificación puso claramente de relieve las tres dimensiones de la filosofía analítica de hoy en español que me gustaría discutir aquí.

2. Con respecto a la dimensión filosófica: Aprendí que cuando tienes que traducir tu trabajo, no puedes esconder las dificultades filosóficas. Las partes mas difíciles de traducir eran siempre las partes mas problemáticas filosóficamente. También tuve ocasión de comprobar con nuevos ejemplos lo que no deja de ser un hecho familiar: que los problemas filosóficos empiezan en el momento de describirlos. Por ejemplo, considera la discusión filosófica sobre lo que, en inglés, denominamos 'belief'. En inglés, un tema central es la relación entre la noción binaria ('on-off belief') y la noción incremental ('credences') de creencia. Según la noción incremental, las

creencias se tienen con distintos grados de convicción. Según la noción binaria, hay solamente dos maneras de creer una proposición: “believe” o “disbelieve”. La literatura en este área trata de la relación entre la creencia binaria y la creencia incremental. Para denotar la creencia incremental, los filósofos anglo-parlantes usan la palabra “credence”.

Lo interesante es que en español, hay solamente una palabra por las dos cosas: “creencia”. Para discutir el mismo tema en español, habría que seleccionar una palabra para distinguir entre los dos tipos de creencia. Y entonces habría que decir primeramente qué quiere decir esa palabra (por ejemplo, ‘creencia binaria’ o ‘creencia incremental’.) Cuando hacemos esto, sin embargo, ya identificamos las propiedades filosóficamente relevantes para esa distinción.

La traducción es una manera de poner a prueba los problemas filosóficos. Esto es un ejemplo del valor de la traducción de la filosofía del inglés al español.

3. Con respecto a la dimensión práctica: Cuando daba mis charlas en español, descubrí que las discusiones eran mucho mejores cuando la audiencia no tenía que traducir la charla. Es más eficiente si la persona que tiene más familiaridad con el tema hace la traducción.

4. Con respecto a la dimensión política: ¿Debemos publicar la filosofía analítica en español hoy? ¿Es esto realmente una pregunta seria? Gonzalo Rodriguez-Pereyra ha publicado recientemente un artículo defendiendo una respuesta en serio. El ofrece una lista enorme de ventajas prácticas a favor de publicar en inglés. Yo opino que hay otra lista enorme de ventajas prácticas a favor de publicar en español. En cualquier caso, la pregunta tiene una significación diferente para el español de la que pueda tener para otros idiomas como el alemán o el francés. El alemán y el francés tienen su lugar en la historia de la filosofía del occidente. Me dicen que los filósofos alemanes consultan frecuentemente la traducción en inglés de la *Crítica de la Razón Pura* de Kant porque es más fácil de entender. Sería natural tener conferencias en inglés sobre Kant en Alemania. Sin embargo, si no tuviéramos discusiones oficiales de filosofía en español en América Latina, la significación sería muy otra. La filosofía en español establece y mantiene el español como un idioma de la filosofía analítica.

En los Estados Unidos e Inglaterra, la filosofía analítica tiene problemas demográficos bien conocidos. Yo opino que esos problemas son artefactos de subculturas de miras estrechas, en las que no hay maneras suficientes de poner a prueba las ideas, las prácticas discursivas, y las relaciones sociales que vienen con ellas. Por una parte esto ocurre porque las preguntas filosóficas son realmente diferentes de las cuestiones en psicología o literatura, o en las áreas vecinas de las ciencias sociales y las humanidades. Pero, por otra parte, las subculturas que encontramos hoy en día en la filosofía analítica son de miras estrechas porque están

influenciadas indebidamente por las fuerzas sociales dominantes. Podemos abrir y mejorar la profesión abriendo y ampliando sus horizontes lingüísticos.

Gracias otra vez por venir. Agradezco mucho al Observatorio, a Diana Sorensen, a Paco Moreno y a Victoria Whitney su ayuda para crear el espacio en el que ha ocurrido nuestra discusión.

**Diana Acosta y Patricia Marechal. Harvard Department of Philosophy.**

“There is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations.”

Michel Foucault - Discipline and Punish

Problem: A considerable amount of the work done by Spanish-speaking analytic philosophers addresses current debates taking place in Anglo-American institutions. However, this work has little, if any, impact on these debates.

Proposed solution: Some Latin-American philosophers have argued that this problem could be solved if Spanish-speaking analytic philosophers wrote and published their work in English.

We offered two objections against this proposal:

(i) It presupposes that adopting English as lingua franca would bring down all the barriers that prevent the acknowledgment of philosophical work done in Hispanic countries. This is a naive approach to the problem: it assumes that the marginalization of the work produced in Spanish-speaking countries is simply the result of idiomatic differences, thereby ignoring the deeper political factors that may be contributing to the current situation. We made use of Rousseau’s distinction between ‘recognition’ and ‘esteem’ in order to illustrate what we believe to be an underlying cause of this problem. We suspect that the low impact of Hispanic philosophy in the English-speaking world is due partly to a lack of recognition of Spanish-speaking philosophers as legitimate actors in the academic world, and of Hispanic institutions as legitimate sources of philosophical knowledge. This is suggested by two facts: first, Spanish-speaking philosophers do attempt to publish their work in English, but this work rarely reaches the pages of highly-ranked journals; second, this is not the case for other non-English-speaking countries, where philosophers make substantial contributions to debates in analytic philosophy. If this view is correct, it is not clear how the proposal would solve the problem. It would certainly enable English speakers to read the work of their Hispanic colleagues. Nevertheless, a dialogue between intellectuals requires bilateral recognition between two parties on equal standing. Even if adopting English as lingua franca would contribute to creating the conditions for this scenario, it would not dissolve the socio-political differences.

(ii) It would generate additional problems for the philosophical community in Latin America. Recent studies show that the level of English proficiency in Latin American countries is alarmingly low. In these countries, only the economically privileged class can access the bilingual education and high quality training that enables the acquisition of the skills necessary to write philosophy papers in English. Thus, adopting English as the language of publication of analytic philosophy would render the profession inaccessible to almost anyone who is not a member of the dominant class in Latin America or, at the very least, it would put people who have had no access to a privileged education at an even steeper disadvantage. Analytic philosophy would then become even less diverse and more discriminatory than it is today, being deprived of a plurality of voices and perspectives. We believe this would have a devastating effect on the quality of work in all areas of philosophy. In particular, we fear that moral and political philosophy produced in Spanish-speaking countries would become the expression of the interests and views of the dominant class. Consequently, the moral imperatives and the views on justice that stem from work in these areas would be irremediably biased.

## **Español**

Es innegable que la filosofía producida en el mundo Hispano-parlante no tiene difusión en las universidades e instituciones académicas Anglo-Americanas. Si nos tomáramos el trabajo de preguntarle a filósofos de lengua inglesa que mencionen a algunos de sus colegas Hispanos obtendríamos pocas, si alguna, respuesta. Más aún, el trabajo de los académicos afiliados a departamentos de filosofía en España y Latinoamérica raramente accede a ser publicado en las afamadas revistas del Norte. Esto es especialmente preocupante dado que los filósofos analíticos de estas regiones dedican su trabajo casi exclusivamente a los debates desarrollados en el mundo anglosajón. Pareciera, entonces, que la comunicación procede en una sola dirección: los filósofos hispanos leen y escriben acerca de los debates que se desarrollan en el mundo angloamericano, pero sus contribuciones y comentarios no tienen recepción, impacto o respuesta alguna por parte de los filósofos angloparlantes que los protagonizan. De esta manera, el trabajo de los filósofos analíticos Hispanos se ha convertido en una glosa o nota marginal destinada a nunca ser leída por los autores de los textos.

Recientemente, algunos filósofos Latinoamericanos han sugerido que la solución a este problema es abandonar la producción de filosofía analítica en español. Si los filósofos hispanos escribieran en inglés, se establecería un diálogo real entre estos dos mundos académicos. Detrás de esta propuesta se cifra la esperanza de que la mera eliminación de barreras idiomáticas posibilite la apertura de un diálogo filosófico con desacuerdos en el contenido pero sin fricciones en la forma.

Algunas de las personas en esta mesa van a referirse [o se han referido] a la importancia de practicar filosofía analítica en español. Sin duda, las diferencias idiomáticas y culturales enriquecen los debates filosóficos de manera substantiva. La diversidad de voces pone a prueba el alcance y validez de nuestras teorías, y contribuye nuevos interrogantes y propuestas originales. Estas son razones de peso para preservar la producción de filosofía analítica en español. Pero al margen de estas consideraciones, vamos a mencionar otros factores que hacen

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de la propuesta de adoptar al inglés como lengua exclusiva de producción filosófica una política inviable.

En primer lugar, hay razones para sospechar que esta propuesta no solucionaría el problema mencionado. Después de todo, no es cierto que los filósofos en universidades Latinoamericanas no escriban en inglés, hablen ese idioma o envíen sus artículos a las revistas sajonas con la expectativa de que aparezcan publicados en las aclamadas páginas de *Nous* o *The Journal of Philosophy*. Sin embargo, el nivel de recepción de estos trabajos sigue siendo insignificante. Es también notable que otras regiones no están sujetas a este problema, al menos no en la misma medida. Por ejemplo, la producción de filosofía germana o francesa sigue siendo atendida, recibida y comentada por parte de los filósofos anglo-americanos en mayor medida que el trabajo producido por sus contra-partes Hispanas. Esto sugiere que hay factores en juego que contribuyen a la marginalización de la filosofía producida en el mundo hispano que no se reducen a una simple diferencia idiomática.

Sospechamos que los problemas que enfrenta la filosofía analítica de origen Hispano no se desvanecerían en el aire si adoptáramos al inglés como idioma exclusivo de producción filosófica. Cuáles son, entonces, las razones por las cuales la tradición analítica en español ha sido ignorada? Para responder a esta pregunta vamos a hacer uso de una distinción formulada por Rousseau entre dos formas de valorar a una persona. Nos referimos a la distinción entre reconocimiento y estima. Nuestra intención no es discutir aquí la distinción en sí misma. Tan



solo consideramos que esta ofrece un marco de análisis que resulta útil en el contexto presente. Mientras reconocimiento implica valorar a alguien intrínsecamente, en y por sí mismo; estima implica considerar que esa persona merece admiración o elogio a raíz de alguna cualidad que posee, el resultado de su trabajo, o algún logro alcanzado. En otras palabras, reconocimiento involucra que una persona, simplemente en virtud de ser tal, sea tenida en cuenta. Por otro lado,

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estima es algo que uno merece en virtud de cualidades o producciones que uno desarrolla. La distinción se torna clara si advertimos que es posible reconocer y respetar a gente con la cual uno desacuerda y cuyo trabajo o cualidades uno no considera particularmente correctos o pertinentes.

Nuestra idea es que la filosofía hispana no es reconocida como una posible fuente de contribuciones que debe ser tenida en cuenta en los debates filosóficos. Detrás de la idea de que la producción de filosofía analítica debe ser llevada a cabo enteramente en inglés se cifra la esperanza de que, si la producción filosófica Hispana estuviera disponible para ser leída por los filósofos sajones, sería apreciada, estimada o refutada en la arena del debate filosófico. Pero la mera disponibilidad de la producción filosófica Latinoamericana no garantiza el reconocimiento básico que es condición necesaria para ser tenido en cuenta como una posible fuente de ideas y contribuciones en el mundo académico. Los motivos, sospechamos, se deben a cuestiones sociopolíticas

que exceden las diferencias idiomáticas: la falta de recepción de estos trabajos obedece a diferencias de poder y control del campo intelectual. Nuestra sugerencia es que parte de las razones por las cuales las instituciones y actores de la academia Hispana no son atendidos y respetados se debe a su procedencia.

En segundo lugar, vale la pena indagar en cuanto a las consecuencias que traería la adopción de la propuesta de escribir y publicar filosofía analítica exclusivamente en inglés. Pareciera que, además de no resolver el problema de fondo que enfrentan los filósofos hispano-parlantes, esta medida crearía problemas adicionales para la comunidad filosófica Latinoamericana.

Para empezar, es necesario reconocer que el nivel de inglés en países de habla hispana es dramáticamente bajo. De acuerdo con el tercer informe publicado por Education First en el 2013 acerca del índice de nivel de inglés, sólo un país en Latinoamérica tiene un nivel medio, Diálogo Acosta-Marechal 04.15.2014 [DRAFT]

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mientras que los demás se encuentran clasificados en los niveles bajo y muy bajo [<http://www.ef.com.es/epi/about-epi/>]. Si bien los departamentos de filosofía pueden no reflejar directamente estas estadísticas, no es razonable asumir que constituyen la excepción. Y aun si estudiantes y profesores en estos departamentos pueden leer en inglés, lo cierto es que publicar y debatir en este idioma demandan un conocimiento que no se adquiere en institutos de enseñanza de lengua. No es suficiente tener un nivel de inglés competente para generar trabajo que sea publicable en journals anglo-americanos, dado que el conocimiento del estilo de presentación, retórica, e intereses no se aprenden solos; se adquieren en el contexto académocultural

de las universidades e instituciones en USA y UK.

Con este trasfondo, ¿qué tan factible es que los filósofos hispano-parlantes perfeccionen su inglés al nivel necesario para publicar en ese idioma? Dado que, al menos por el momento, tal escenario no es muy plausible, vale la pena preguntarnos qué pasaría si únicamente aquellos académicos que tienen suficiente dominio sobre este idioma produjeran filosofía analítica. En otras palabras, ¿qué consecuencias traería convertir el dominio del inglés en un requisito para participar en debates filosóficos?

Y es aquí donde radica nuestra principal preocupación, ya que el nivel de inglés de los habitantes de países Latinoamericanos está directamente correlacionado con su estatus socioeconómico. Solamente personas pertenecientes a una clase socioeconómica elevada tienen la posibilidad de

acceder a una educación bilingüe y lo suficientemente buena para garantizar el dominio del lenguaje que es requerido para escribir artículos filosóficos de alta calidad. Dado que el acceso a la educación bilingüe y está limitado a las clases sociales de poder, parecería que dichas clases se convertirían en las voces dominantes, por no decir las únicas voces, en la filosofía del mundo hispano-parlante. En este orden de ideas, se excluiría del debate filosófico a las personas que no tienen medios económicos para acceder a una educación bilingüe y.

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Entre los problemas que traerían este tipo de políticas excluyentes, vale la pena mencionar que la filosofía se volvería una disciplina aún más homogénea de lo que es actualmente, viéndose privada de la presencia de minorías. Pero más allá de esto, el contenido de nuestros debates filosóficos se vería afectado. Por ejemplo, en áreas filosóficas como ética o filosofía política la diversidad de voces garantiza que los imperativos, las normas morales, y las visiones sobre la justicia, no sean simplemente la expresión de los intereses de grupos de poder. La exclusión de las clases no dominantes del debate filosófico generaría una gran pérdida en la cantidad y diversidad de posiciones, reduciendo a la filosofía Latinoamericanas a una condición de miopía. Diálogo Acosta-Marechal 04.15.2014 [DRAFT]

Diana Perez

University of Buenos Aires.

18 April 2014.

## **The Dialogue in Philosophy**

1. The first thing I want to celebrate is the title Susanna gave to this event “El Diálogo” (The Dialogue). Because philosophy is, in my view, a dialogical activity, and all what I will be saying depends on accepting this idea: that philosophy is a form dialogue. The image that people have about philosophers usually is that of an old person thinking in solitude, far away from the world and the society where he lives. But this image is just wrong: philosophy is something done by YOUNG, MIDDLE AGED, and also old men AND WOMEN, and it usually involves a lot of social activities, for example exchanging ideas orally in Congresses, round tables and classes, writing -something we do having in mind the potential readers of our texts-, and so on. Not in vain some of the first philosophical works we still read have a dialogical structure, I am thinking in Plato’s books.

2. A dialogue is also the way in which human beings can understand each other and look for agreements in order to build a fair and democratic society. A dialogue is a place where everyone can freely express their ideas and feelings, but also where everyone has the right to be heard by the others. A dialogue is a human practice based on a symmetric relationship between the participants. Equals can dialogue, but two people with different power, in different levels of a hierarchy do not usually dialogue because one of them has the power to order the other what to do, and if that happens, the dialogue is broken. Everything I am saying is probably a set of platitudes, but you have to keep in mind these features of dialogues in order to see where I am trying to go.

3. A dialogue, as all of us know, is a human activity *which is done by means of a shared language*. If two people want to engage in a conversation they have to share a common language, or at least they have to be able to understand the other people’s language. I want to stress here this last option, because it is a common experience for those like me which have a roman language as a mother’s tongue that we can engage in a dialogue (philosophical or not) with people talking a *different*

roman language. This is a frequent experience for us, Argentineans who speak Spanish, when we travel to Brazil where people speak Portuguese. Obviously it is not the same to dialogue with someone who speaks the same language than with someone who speaks another we understand partially. But when there are truly communicative intentions by the two people involved, and there is a common subject that both people know, for example a specific topic in philosophy, the communication is easy and fruitful even if nobody gives up his own language.

In fact, as Noe 2009, p. 103 remarks, “in most of the world people live in densely multilinguistic environments. Indeed, the very idea of one people/ one language is a cultural invention of the nineteenth century... (in cases of multilingual societies) the question of translating between these languages does not arise... Languages are aspects of engaged human living.” On the other hand, it is worth remembering that the idea of a universal language like Esperanto was a failure, because it is simply not true that people would choose a shared language in order to communicate to each other; probably because for the speaker, its own tongue will always be better, and for the hearer every second language would not be as difficult to decode as any other (in the case of us, Spanish speakers, any other roman language will be probably easier to decode than a non-roman language like English, *ceteris paribus*).

4. If you agree with my idea that philosophy is a dialogical practice, we should acknowledge the fact that, as any other practice, philosophy is ruled by certain norms, some of them explicit, many others implicit. And these norms or rules which guide the practice of philosophy depend on some values. In order to consider the question that convenes us here today (what is the best language for philosophy?), we should ask to ourselves what we think philosophy is, and what values we consider to be at the top of the ranking of our philosophical practices. In my opinion some values we should adopt for guiding our activity as philosophers are: *Freedom* to present our ideas in the way we want; *Tolerance* to accept what is different from us; *Curiosity* and *lack of prejudice* in order to search – across the borders of languages- for the interesting and original ideas presented by our fellows. And none of these values guide me to recommend anyone to write or talk in any particular language.

5. Let me now take a look for some arguments proposed in order to abandon Spanish, my mother’s tongue, for doing philosophy.

5.1. One fact we should consider when choosing in which language to write (or speak) is the intended audience we want to reach. And the fact that English has

become the shared common language for the scientific (broadly speaking) community, led some people to defend the idea that we should only write and talk in professional contexts in English. For example, Gonzalo Rodriguez Pereyra, a well known Argentinean philosopher who worked for the last 20 years and still works in the UK, recently held: "original work of research in Analytic Philosophy broadly conceived should nowadays be published exclusively in English. Publishing such work in English is very valuable, but publishing it in languages other than English is of little or no value." The main reason Gonzalo gives in support to this claim is a fact about the number of potential English readers and the number of journals that publish papers only in English. But his conclusion includes the word "should". Leaving aside the obvious philosophical difficulties that lie behind the naturalistic fallacy, I will remark that from the very same fact we can draw different norms: for example, from the fact that there are less Afro-American people in universities in the United States many departments adopted the policy of establishing quotas to ensure their presence, and this policy has also been applied in the case of women as well as with other minorities. So, we might well conclude that the best norm we can draw from the fact that the great majority of papers are published in English is that the journals should establish a quota of foreign (other than English) languages articles to be included in each number, instead of concluding that it is less valuable to publish in a minority language. Which inference we draw depends upon what values we decide to adopt. And if we choose the values I mentioned above, the inference we should make is quite different from Gonzalo's.

**5.2.** A second reason for quitting Spanish would be the idea that there are different appropriate languages for different activities. When I was young I was told that Carlos V, Holy Roman Emperor, King of the Romans, Italy and Spain, Archduke of Austria, and Duke of Burgundy (1500-1558) held that there are different languages for different human activities: German for guiding horses, English for ordering dogs, French for diplomacy and Spanish for love.<sup>1</sup> Leaving aside the historical adequacy of this quotation, the idea behind it is the same: there are appropriate languages for each kind of human activity. This idea is obviously wrong. And native English-speakers probably feel as uneasy with my starting quotation from Carlos V, as I -as a native Spanish-speaking philosopher- feel uneasy with the imposition of English as a mean to express my ideas. In my personal case, in fact, when I was a student of philosophy my professors used to hold that the only language in which philosophy makes sense is German (at least Hegelian and Heideggerian philosophers in Argentina used to think that) or alternatively that French is the proper language for philosophy (Existencialist and Postmodernist

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<sup>1</sup> This list is the one I remember from my youth, but it seems that he in fact said: "Hablo español con Dios, italiano con las mujeres, francés con los hombres y alemán con mi caballo". (I am not clear if he said it in Spanish or not). English was useless for the king or, more likely, he did not speak English... In any case, the idea I want to stress underlying the quotation remains intact no matter what languages and what activities are involved.

thought that). I am lucky that Classical Greek is a dead tongue now because probably someone would have said to me that I should write in Ancient Greek! In any case, at least in my country, and as far as I know in other Spanish speaking countries, Spanish is not viewed as an adequate language for philosophy. I am not sure why, but the fact is that Spanish is barely thought of as a good language for expressing our philosophical ideas.

The conclusion after briefly examined these two arguments is that I have no reasons to abandon Spanish in order to express my philosophical thinking.

6. In what follows I will try to give some reasons why I think we should take Spanish seriously as a language for philosophy, i.e. I will try then to give some reason for NOT changing my own language while philosophizing.

**6.1.** The first point I want to stress is that language and thought are not as close as someone could think. Language is not just a transparent media in which we incarnate our languageless, abstract, universal, unpolluted thoughts. I am not defending here a linguistic/conceptual relativism or something like this. I do agree with those (like Davidson) who hold that every human thought is able to be expressed in every human natural language. But the way in which we express the same thought in different languages has some specific features which are not present in every “incarnation” of the thought. Because some words have different extensions in different languages (for example color terms), some etymologies are involved in one word in a given language but not in another (for example even though “clap” and “applause” seem to be synonymous, one of them -because of its etymology- means approval and the other do not; but in Spanish we only have the first of them: aplaudir), or some words are composed by others in a certain language, but are atomic in another (for example boyfriend and novio), and also because some words sound heavy in a language and soft in another (hear the difference between “catarata” and “fall” or between “screech” and “grito” ) or vice versa, etc. So the web of psychological associations that a word in a given language activates in our minds are no exactly the same in all languages, even if the informational content we express is (more or less) the same. Sometimes even we have to transliterate some words (“robot”)<sup>2</sup> or add some new words to our language in order to express the ideas of another culture (eg. the Portuguese notion of “saudade”)

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<sup>2</sup> *Robot* is a word of Czech origin. His origin is the Czech noun “robota”, meaning “forced labor slavery”. That is, a robot is a mechanical slave working at our command. It was first used in the play RUR (Rossum's Universal Robots) (1921) by Karel Čapek.

**6.2.** I am not making a too strong or odd claim here, the fact I try to highlight is obvious when we think about translation. I am not only thinking about the problems we have when translating literature but also philosophy. I teach philosophy in Spanish and I always have the problem that I do not have any translation into Spanish of most of the texts I want to discuss with my students. So I make (with my collaborators) many translations from English into Spanish, and the fact is that it is not as easy as we can think to translate philosophical stuff. You can choose the example you want but some examples I have in mind are the difficulties we have when translating into Spanish the German word "Dasein", the Greek word "ousia" or the English expression "knowledge by acquaintance".

Let us think for a moment in the last case, which belongs to the core of the analytic tradition. The verb "to know" can be translated into two different Spanish words: "saber" and "conocer." (In Spanish we know (saber) facts but we know (conocer) people and places). This is a trouble from the beginning because for us it is not obvious that both words are expressing the same concept. It is something we should prove. And things get worse when we realize that in philosophy at least since Russell and Ryle, we are used to distinguish three different kinds of knowledge: knowledge that (propositional knowledge), know-how and knowledge by acquaintance. But in Spanish we have a different word for knowledge of people and places, and we have two different grammatical constructions in the case of abilities: one of them is the same as in English: "saber cómo (jugar al ajedrez)" and the other has no parallel in English: "saber" plus a verb in the infinitive form: Saber jugar al ajedrez. And even worse we do not have any word for acquaintance, because we do not have the ordinary notion of someone being acquainted with someone else (we will probably say that someone is "conocido" of someone else, but it is probably not the same as being acquainted... At least that is what I heard once from some English colleagues)

**6.3.** This kind of examples show clearly why all philosophers agree in the thesis that reading a philosophical text in its original language is a necessary condition for a proper understanding of the ideas the philosopher held, at least in Argentina we were all taught like that and it is something that became obvious to us when we are engaged in translating a philosophical work. But if I am right, we should accept as well the other side of that coin: that we will never be able to express as acutely, precisely, properly the thoughts we have as Spanish-native speakers in other language than Spanish. Unless we are bilingual (and that is, I am afraid, a matter of chance, it is not up to us to decide whether we will become bilingual or not), we will not be able to express our thoughts with the same accuracy in another language than ours. (Of course, we might be encouraged to leave our own countries and move to an English-speaking country and live there for 20 or 30 years in order

to acquire properly a second language, but it is not something anyone can ask to any other person to do). And if I am right, why should I be asked to change my mother's language in order to express my philosophical ideas? If someone wants to truly understand my philosophical thesis he should make an effort and try to understand my native language in which I will probably express in the best way I can, my thoughts, it is not only with dead German or Greek or French philosophers that we should understand their language in order to understand their thoughts.

What I am trying to argue for is that the medium we choose in order to express our ideas is important, it matters for expressing in the best way we can our ideas and feeling. And if so we can look to what occurs with literature, and it is a fact that great writers, such as Jorge Luis Borges, despite being almost bilingual, did not write any of his major work in any language other than Spanish, and the same goes for Julio Cortázar or Juan José Saer who spoke French fluently and who lived most of their lives in France too. So the reasons to prefer (as a writer) one language or another are not merely the number of potential readers we can have. Our mother's tongue allows us to express in a better way what we think.

7. There is an obvious tension between two different communicational maxims we have to take into consideration when we decide how to express our thoughts. On the one hand, as writers or speakers, we want to have the most extended possible audience. On the other hand, as writers or speakers, we want to express our thoughts as accurately as we can. The second maxim always makes us prefer our own language. But the first one sometimes is in conflict with the second one, because we can reach a wider audience using another language than ours. Sometimes we can decide to put the first one above. But the tension should not always be solved putting the first maxim above the second one. It seems to me that each time someone like me who can choose between two different languages starts to write something should ask to yourself about all the issues I raised here (and probably many others I did not address here). Putting the second maxim always in the first place leads us to the impossibility of communicating with many people, and in the end to isolation. Putting the first one always above leads us to forget who we are, to abandon our own language as a genuine way of expressing our thoughts, and as a consequence the dialogue became poorer because the subtleties we can make in our own language (but not in others) are buried. The decision will be highly contextual: there is not a single rule to follow in every case.

8. It is important to note that even if I am discussing this issue in an individualistic setting up to this point, everything I said about the individual decisions we should do as writers and speakers are considerations that should also be taken into account when we make political decisions within the institutions in which we, individual people, work and develop. So the same considerations I think we as individual writers or speaker should do in order to choose the language in



which to express our thought are the considerations that many people should take into account: for example the Editor of a given Journal, who refuses articles in other languages than English, or the organizers of conferences where a single language is accepted, or a given university where a single language is used for teaching, and so on. These are some of the implicit rules (I say implicit because nobody thinks about them) which are behind the philosophical practice nowadays. All I am saying is that unifying the language, trying to impose a universal shared language to all the participants of the philosophical dialogues we are engaged in, leads us to have poorer discussions, poorer ideas, because inevitably we lose the hues and subtleties different languages provide. A careful pluralism which avoids the isolation of the minorities is the kind of strategy I have in mind.

In the last minutes I have let me give you some examples of institutional decisions we recently made in Argentina in order to reach equilibrium between the two maxims. About workshops and other scientific events. First: I was one of the two persons (with Eleonora Orlando) who organized the first workshop fully in English in Argentina, in 2003 (Susanna was one of our invited speakers). And we had a lot of resistance because we heard arguments like this: why all Spanish speaking persons (Argentineans, Spanish, Mexican, etc.) should be speaking in English in Argentina? And the answer was clear for me: because the decision at that point was to put the maxim of communication in the first place. But it wasn't easy at that time and many people disagreed with us.

Second: Since 2008 I am the president of the Argentinean Society for Analytic Philosophy, and every time we decide to do some activity in English in our Society we should face the shadow of the opposition: why someone should be forced to speak in other language than Spanish in a Spanish speaking society? I think that 10 years after that first workshop, we reached now a good equilibrium: nobody is forced to speak in other language than Spanish, and all the visitors coming to our Society know that we speak in Spanish, but given the fact that we usually invite non-Spanish speakers we guarantee that they will be able to have a fruitful philosophical exchange with us: either because those who want to do that will be allowed to speak in English (the majority of people do that) or because we will have some English version of the paper written in Spanish in order that English speakers could follow the talk given in Spanish. And I think that something like this should be done in every conference. I mean: when some English speaking philosopher goes abroad to a non-English speaking country, he should be concerned with finding some way to make him understandable to all the people, and not simply suppose that everyone should understand his English.

Finally, about written works in philosophical journals. As a member of the Editorial Board of the Journal *Análisis Filosófico*, I was one of the three people (with Eduardo Rivera López and Marcelo Alegre) incorporated to the conduction of the journal in 2000 who fought against the older members in order to allow the publication of papers in English in the journal. At some point some colleagues argued that only native English speakers should be allowed to publish in English in our journal, and I argued that also Spanish speakers should be allowed to publish in English if they wanted to do so, for communicational purposes, for example. And my argument was exactly the same I am using now for defending the idea that those who want to give a talk or publish their philosophical ideas in Spanish should be allowed to do it. Because everyone has the right to express their ideas in the best way we can, trying to reach the audience they want with their texts.

To summarize, my proposal is to explore the most diverse strategies in order to promote the dialogue between English-speakers and Spanish-speakers (in this case), respecting the diversity and allowing everyone to chose the best way each one finds to express their thoughts, and trying to avoid the isolation of those who chose the minority language en each case.

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## **The Latin of Modern Times**

Josefa Toribio

Dialogue about Philosophy in Spanish

I think of English as the Latin of modern times. It plays the role that Latin used to play for Europeans in the Middle Ages. Unsurprisingly, both Latin and English are languages of an Empire. But so is Spanish, the language of a (fortunately) lost Empire. I can well imagine philosophers from non-Spanish speaking countries, including some colleagues from the Basque Country or Catalonia, raising their voices against the idea that Spanish should play the role that English plays today in all areas of academia. We should thus not be lured into straightforwardly associating the idea that Iberian and Latin American philosophers should publish exclusively in English, with some sort of imperialism. The issues here are complex. We must resist the temptation of letting political ideology drive the discussion. In particular, we should resist the thought that the contributions to philosophy made in English by Spanish-speaking philosophers are a sign of subordination or dependency. Quite the opposite: this should be taken as an illustration of the equal status shared by those who make of critical analysis and the sheer pursuit of philosophical knowledge their ultimate goal.

There is another pitfall to be avoided: to think that in choosing English as their academic tongue, Spanish-speaking philosophers have given up the historical goals of philosophy as a humanistic discipline. The complaint is that a good part of the philosophy published in English belongs to a tradition or style of doing

philosophy—the analytic tradition—which, some contend, is completely detached from our most personal human concerns and aspirations. The criticism is that Iberian and Latin American philosophers who write in English do so because they endorse the kind of philosophical specialization that characterizes analytic philosophy, which, in turn, entails abandoning the historical goals of philosophical enquiry. Having decided to use English as their academic language means, on this view, that these philosophers have given up the idea that philosophy’s main goal is “to offer a worldview and give a personal answer to existential questions” (“ofrecer una *cosmovisión* y dar una respuesta *personal* a las preguntas de la existencia” (Guillermo Hurtado, “Qué es y qué puede ser la filosofía analítica”, *Diánoia*, vol. 57, no. 68, 2012, p. 166).

This is an unfounded claim in general, as shown by the work of many English speaking philosophers who engage in issues of deeply personal, social and political significance, like Bernard Williams, Elizabeth Brake or Jay Wallace, to name just a few. It is also unfounded when the claim purports to refer, in particular, to Iberian and Latin American philosophers. The examples here are many, but let me just mention one: José Medina’s recently published *The Epistemology of Resistance: Gender and Racial Oppression, Epistemic Injustice, and Resistant Imaginations*.

A different matter, and one to which we, Spanish-speaking philosophers, should be sensitive to, is the potential impoverishment of the language due to the introduction of Anglicisms in our Spanish philosophical vocabulary. Always writing about philosophy in English may have this consequence. I am painfully aware of this danger. For better or for worse, I think about philosophy in English, even though I did not have a bilingual upbringing and did not find myself in an English-speaking environment until I finished my PhD. But then, I spent twenty years of my life in English speaking countries. I only occasionally publish in Spanish. When I do, I often struggle with finding the correct Spanish word for a philosophical view or for a key philosophical concept. In conversation, given that most of my colleagues and

students speak English, the linguistic betrayal is easy. This strikes me as highly undesirable.

I have been living and working in Barcelona for the last five past years now. I doubt my employers, a Catalan Research Institution, would be happy at all if I decided to start publishing philosophy in Spanish—but that would not be because they think I should publish in Catalan! Professional philosophers are under a lot of pressure to publish and to publish in high impact journals. Most of these journals publish exclusively in English. I find it interesting that the issue about the quality of the philosophy journals that publish exclusively in English, as opposed to those publishing exclusively in Spanish, has not been addressed in some of the exchanges about this topic published so far. I suppose that, in mentioning it, one opens another can of worms about journals rankings. But, I believe I am not at all biased when I claim that if professional Iberian and Latin American philosophers aim at publishing in the best philosophical journals, then they will need to write in English. Interestingly, the Spanish and Latin American philosophy journals that compete with some of their Anglo-Saxon cousins are precisely those open to submissions written in either language. It shouldn't come as a surprise because, in doing so, they guarantee that the work can be evaluated by a wider community of experts, and this, at least to some extent, contributes to raising their standards.

Not only do I not encourage my students to publish in Spanish, I positively encourage them to publish in English, partially for that reason. Like any other supervisor, I want my students to get a job soon after they finish. Academic jobs in philosophy are so limited that I want them to increase their chances by being in a position to apply anywhere there is an opening, including non-Spanish speaking countries. If their formative years help them to think and write about philosophy in English, they will be moving a step forward in that direction.

As part of a multi-linguistic Europe, Spanish Universities have to be sensitive to the needs and expectations of students regardless of their native language. The philosophy departments of different Catalan Universities, with this concern in mind, have joined efforts to offer two excellent MA programmes in philosophy, one in analytic philosophy, the other in cognitive science and language. We can compete with other European Universities only because these programmes are taught in English. All the professors involved in the programme teach in English, the students have to write their papers in English. They write their final research paper in English. Most likely, their first published paper will be in English. And all this happens while the Catalan Universities that host these programmes carry on teaching both in Spanish and Catalan. There is no massive breakdown of the institutions of the kind once suggested by Guillermo Hurtado. There is a peaceful and productive pluralism of languages and styles of thinking (as analytic philosophers continue to be a minority in Spain).

A final, again, autobiographical note. I am the president of the Spanish Society of Analytic Philosophy. The Society organizes regular meetings, conferences and lectures, and also foster research and teaching in the analytic tradition. We collaborate with other philosophical associations, especially in Latin America, and are now editing a series of volumes with contributions to each of the central branches of philosophy, like epistemology, metaphysics or aesthetics. These volumes are published in Spanish and they play an important role in making available to high-school students and their philosophy teachers central contemporary debates in these areas of philosophy. Most of the events the Society organizes, however, are done in English (this, by the way, is not a policy I have introduced. The policy was in place before I was elected president). Are we being snob or succumbing to the perils of language imperialism? I don't think so. In pursuing this route, we benefit from contributions from scholars all over the world

and can present our own contributions to a wider community. This wider exchange of ideas raises the bar for rigor, originality and critical analysis.

My modest contribution to this round table has not been driven by general political or strictly academic ideas. My considerations have been, for the most part, pragmatic. Given how the academic world works, I agree that publishing analytic philosophy in English is probably the best thing to do. My recommendation has this limited, pragmatic, force, but it is one that it cannot be easily dismissed without compromising some important aspects of our professional commitments.

Laura Pérez – UAM

*Diálogo sobre filosofía en español*

Observatorio, Harvard University

18<sup>th</sup> April, 2014

‘A Case of Simultaneous Translation into Spanish’

Laura Perez

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My aim here is to address the problem of making simultaneous translation of lectures in philosophy.

I examine two aspects of a Mexican research project in philosophy.

- Regarding the events: If the guest is a non-Spanish speaker, simultaneous translation is necessary for the talks to happen.
- Regarding the members: Almost none of us (i.e. faculty and student members) judge ourselves as competent in spoken English.

About the project:

UAM-Cuajimalpa<sup>3</sup>, in Mexico City, hosts a three-year research project in philosophy of perception.

Our group is made up of undergraduate, graduate students and professors interested in the areas of philosophy of mind and perception.

We organize three types of events:

- Seminars,
- Talks and
- Advice sessions.

My case of study:

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<sup>3</sup> Autonomous Metropolitan University-Cuajimalpa, Mexico City: <http://www.cua.uam.mx/>



Last February, Professor Christopher Peacocke (Columbia University) visited UAM-C to give a lecture.

For the lecture, Dr. Alvaro Pelaez –project’s director– hired the service of simultaneous translation:

- *Primary benefit:* a more inclusive environment.
- *Primary limit:* the lecture is just a small part of the activities involved in hosting a non-Spanish speaker philosopher.

Differences between attending a lecture in Spanish and a lecture in English are reflected on the reactions to it –e.g. we think we will not follow the response to the queries, so it might be that we do not pose a question.

Some of our non-Spanish visitors had given their lectures in Spanish, e.g. Professor Susanna Siegel (Harvard University) and Ph.D. student Thomas Meier (LMU München.)

### Philosophy in English?

Almost none of the members of the project normally engage in philosophical discussions, give talks or write papers in English.

Philosophy taught at UAM-C (the great majority) is in Spanish:

- Philosophy courses cover only 30% of the undergraduate program in Humanities.
- For the courses, we use classic references already translated into Spanish.

### Advise sessions with C. Peacocke:

After the lecture, Christopher gave a two-hour research advice to four students (all external to UAM-C.)

- Two students needed a translator for the advice session.
- I helped with the translation and committed mistakes; for instance, instead of saying ‘X explains Y’, I said: ‘Y explains X.’ Christopher corrected the mistake.
- I left out details of Christopher’s feedback to the students because my vocabulary is not that rich and broad in English.

The following queries might be raised:

- Do we meet the material conditions to host a non-Spanish speaker philosopher?
- Should we only have Spanish speakers to give philosophy lectures at UAM-C?
- Should we stop using simultaneous translation?
- Is it stimulating to visit UAM-C, if almost none of us are competent in spoken English?
- Is simultaneous translation being an effective strategy to host a non-Spanish speaker philosopher?

Conclusion: Our aims are to communicate and discuss ideas in a philosophical environment. Communicating and discussing in two languages has many advantages, e.g. one can enrich and enhance the formulation of one's ideas.

*Diálogo sobre filosofía en español*

Observatorio, Harvard University

Abril 18, 2014

'Un caso de traducción simultánea al español'

Laura Pérez

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Mi propósito es abordar el problema en torno a traducir conferencias sobre filosofía de manera simultánea.

Examinaré dos aspectos de un proyecto mexicano de investigación sobre filosofía.

- Sobre las actividades: Si el invitado no es un hablante del español, la traducción simultánea es necesaria para que las conferencias impartidas tengan lugar.
- Sobre los miembros: Casi ninguno de nosotros (i.e. profesorado y estudiantes) nos juzgamos como competentes del inglés hablado.

Sobre el proyecto:

La UAM-Cuajimalpa<sup>4</sup>, en la Ciudad de México, es la sede de un proyecto de tres años de investigación sobre filosofía de la percepción.

Nuestro grupo está conformado por estudiantes de licenciatura y posgrado, y profesores interesados en las áreas de filosofía de la mente y la percepción.

Organizamos tres tipos de actividades:

- Seminarios,
- Ponencias y
- Asesorías.

Mi caso de estudio:

El profesor Christopher Peacocke (Universidad de Columbia) visitó la UAM-C para impartir una conferencia el febrero pasado.

Para la conferencia, el Dr. Álvaro Peláez –responsable del proyecto– contrató el servicio de traducción simultánea:

- *Beneficio principal*: un entorno más inclusivo.
- *Limitación principal*: la conferencia es sólo una pequeña parte de las actividades involucradas en recibir a un filósofo no hablante del español.

Las diferencias entre asistir a una conferencia en español y una conferencia en inglés se reflejan en las reacciones a ésta –e.g. pensamos que no seguiremos la respuesta a las preguntas, de modo que podría ser que no planteemos ninguna.

Algunos de nuestros invitados no hablantes del español han impartido conferencias en español, e.g. la profesora Susanna Siegel (Harvard University) y el estudiante de doctorado Thomas Meier (LMU München).

¿Filosofía en inglés?

Casi ninguno de los miembros del proyecto entabla discusiones filosóficas, imparte ponencias o escribe artículos en inglés.

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<sup>4</sup> Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, Unidad Cuajimalpa, Ciudad de México:  
<http://www.cua.uam.mx/>

La filosofía que se enseña en la UAM-C (la mayor parte) es en español:

- Los cursos de filosofía sólo cubren el 30% del programa de estudios de licenciatura en humanidades.
- Para los cursos, usamos referencias clásicas que ya están traducidas al español.

Asesorías con C. Peacocke:

Después de la conferencia, Christopher dio dos horas de asesoría a cuatro estudiantes (todos ellos externos a la UAM-C).

- Dos estudiantes requerían de un traductor para la asesoría.
- Ayudé con la traducción y cometí errores; por ejemplo, en lugar de decir: 'X explica a Y', dije: 'Y explica a X'. Christopher corrigió el error.
- Omití detalles de la respuesta de Christopher a los estudiantes porque mi vocabulario no es tan rico ni amplio en inglés.

Podrían plantearse las siguientes cuestiones:

- ¿Satisfacemos las condiciones materiales para recibir a un filósofo no hablante del español?
- ¿Deberíamos tener solamente a hablantes del español para impartir conferencias sobre filosofía en la UAM-C?
- ¿Deberíamos dejar de emplear traducción simultánea?
- ¿Es estimulante visitar la UAM-C, si casi ninguno de los miembros del proyecto es competente del inglés hablado?
- ¿La traducción simultánea ha sido una estrategia efectiva para recibir a un filósofo no hablante del español?

Para concluir: Nuestros objetivos son comunicar y discutir ideas en un entorno filosófico. Comunicarse y discutir en dos idiomas tiene muchas ventajas, e.g. se puede enriquecer y mejorar la formulación de las ideas propias.

Equivalencia semántica y el lenguaje del análisis filosófico

Jorge J. E. Gracia

Tesis

La equivalencia semántica entre textos de filosofía analítica en lenguajes diferentes es difícil, si no imposible en ciertos

casos, de lograr y por lo tanto es un error restringir la tarea de la filosofía analítica al inglés, como pretende Gustavo Rodríguez-Pereyra.

Aprendiendo a hacer filosofía traduciendo a Suárez.

Presupuesto de la traducción

Principio de la Equivalencia Semántica de Textos en Lenguajes Diferentes (PES) (versión fuerte):

*Cualquier texto en cualquier lenguaje tiene textos actuales o potenciales equivalentes semánticamente en cualquier otro lenguaje.*

Ej. de texto científico

1. 'H<sub>2</sub>O boils at 100 degrees C'

2. '*H<sub>2</sub>O hierve a 100 grados C*'

¿Qué significa que 1 sea equivalente semánticamente a 2?

1 y 2 expresan la misma proposición (criterio metafísico)

1 causa la misma comprensión en la audiencia lingüística A que 2 causa en audiencia lingüística B (criterio epistemológico)

¿Cuáles son las condiciones de equivalencia semántica?

Una condición necesaria es que haya una comunidad de usuarios de los lenguajes en que 1 y 2 se expresan

Las traducciones de 1 por 2, o viceversa, parecen satisfacer el PES.

Ej. de texto literario

1. *Hope is the thing with feathers.*

2. La esperanza es la cosa con plumas.
3. La esperanza es la cosa que tiene plumas (*Hope is the thing that has feathers*).
4. La esperanza es la cosa emplumada (*Hope is the feathered thing*).
5. La esperanza es una cosa de plumas (*Hope is a thing with feathers*).
6. La esperanza es algo de plumas (*Hope is something made up of feathers*).
7. La esperanza es esa cosa con plumas (*Hope is that thing with feathers*).

(7 is Josefa Toribio's suggestion.)

2 es traducción literal de 1, pero no es semánticamente equivalente a 1.

3, 4, 5, 6, y 7 son traducciones alternativas de 1, pero no equivalentes a 1.

Estas traducciones no parecen satisfacer el PES.

Tesis de Rodríguez-Pereyra: "la investigación en filosofía analítica concebida ampliamente debe ser publicada exclusivamente en inglés."

(Aquí asumo que "debe" implica "puede.")

Objeción inefectiva en contra de la tesis de R-P

La tesis de R-P se apoya en PES y el PES es falso (cf., textos literarios).

## Respuesta a la objeción

La tesis de R-P requiere sólo una versión menos fuerte de PES:

*Cualquier texto resultado de la investigación filosófica analítica en cualquier lenguaje tiene un texto actual o potencial equivalente semánticamente en inglés, y viceversa.*

## Dos estrategias efectivas en contra de la tesis de R-P

- (I) La tesis de R-P necesita la existencia de una comunidad filosófica analítica de usuarios que satisfagan ciertas condiciones, y tal comunidad no existe.

Condiciones de la comunidad lingüística requerida por la tesis de R-P:

Entrenamiento curricular común

Presupuestos metodológicos comunes

Lenguaje de educativo y discurso erudito comunes

Géneros comunes de escritura

Tradición filosófica basada en textos filosóficos

comunes

Ej. La edad media latina tenía tal comunidad, pero los filósofos analíticos de todo el mundo no constituyen tal comunidad.

- (II) Para que la tesis de R-P funcione, el lenguaje usado en la filosofía analítica tendría que ser como el lenguaje que usan los científicos en ciencias particulares, y como el lenguaje ordinario. Pero los filósofos analíticos no usan tal lenguaje, excepto en unos pocos campos técnicos tales como la lógica y la filosofía de la ciencia, y no es deseable que lo usen.

1. La filosofía analítica ha favorecido especialmente el lenguaje ordinario desde sus inicios.
2. Las peculiaridades de lenguajes particulares han dado origen a posiciones filosóficas.
3. La estrecha relación entre lenguaje ordinario y cultura es significativa.
4. El lenguaje ordinario está estrechamente relacionado a la experiencia y la experiencia es fundamental para la filosofía.

### Conclusion

Now it should be clear to you why I started this talk with a reference to my project of translating Suárez's Disputation V. A translator, as Boethius so well put it, is always a traitor, for a translation always fails to some extent, even when the translator is translating a rather technical philosophical text. Ruffino, one of Rodríguez-Pereyra's critics, is simply wrong when he states that "Knowledge of Greek and Latin is certainly not a *sine qua non* condition for reading ancient Greek or medieval philosophy, since there are usually good translations available." True, one may be able to read the translated texts, but as to understanding the original author's meaning, that is another matter altogether. My experience is just the contrary to that of Ruffino, for there is not a single translation of a philosophical text from one language I know into another that I also know, that satisfies me, or that is universally regarded by experts as a completely faithful translation of the original. Indeed, it is precisely because of this that the process of translation opens windows to previously unknown vistas and the reason I was able to learn much by translating Suárez's text into English.

What Rodríguez-Pereyra says leads me to infer that he is not very fond of diversity, but scientists tell us that diversity is the key to life. Nature teaches quite clearly that a genetically diverse pool is the key to survival and flourishing. Consider how the very make up of our species seeks variety. Nature wants diversity in order to facilitate our endurance. And such variety is also beneficial in the language of philosophy, as the history of philosophy indicates, and it should also be



beneficial when it comes to analytic philosophy. The PSE is not pertinent not because it is impossible to find such textual equivalents, as Benjamin Lee Whorf thought, but because it is very difficult to do so in part because the language of philosophy, including that of analytic philosophy, is mixed with ordinary and even literary language insofar as it relies on ordinary experience.

So, no, let us not restrict doing analytic philosophy to English unless we want to fall into a dogmatic slumber. Other languages should broaden the horizons of philosophical analysis and thus be instrumental in our quest for greater philosophical understanding.

University at Buffalo



Jorge Gracia

## Equivalencia semántica y el lenguaje del análisis filosófico

Jorge J. E. Gracia

Tesis

La equivalencia semántica entre textos de filosofía analítica en lenguajes diferentes es difícil, si no imposible en ciertos casos, de lograr y por lo tanto es un error restringir la tarea de la filosofía analítica al inglés, como pretende Gustavo Rodríguez-Pereyra.

Aprendiendo a hacer filosofía traduciendo a Suárez.

Presupuesto de la traducción

Principio de la Equivalencia Semántica de Textos en Lenguajes Diferentes (PES) (versión fuerte):

*Cualquier texto en cualquier lenguaje tiene textos actuales o potenciales equivalentes semánticamente en cualquier otro lenguaje.*

Ej. de texto científico

1. 'H<sub>2</sub>O boils at 100 degrees C'

2. '*H<sub>2</sub>O hierve a 100 grados C*'

¿Qué significa que 1 sea equivalente semánticamente a 2?

1 y 2 expresan la misma proposición (criterio metafísico)

1 causa la misma comprensión en la audiencia lingüística A que 2 causa en audiencia lingüística B (criterio epistemológico)

¿Cuáles son las condiciones de equivalencia semántica?

Una condición necesaria es que haya una comunidad de usuarios de los lenguajes en que 1 y 2 se expresan

Las traducciones de 1 por 2, o viceversa, parecen satisfacer el PES.

Ej. de texto literario

1. *Hope is the thing with feathers.*

2. La esperanza es la cosa con plumas.

3. La esperanza es la cosa que tiene plumas (*Hope is the thing that has feathers*).

4. La esperanza es la cosa emplumada (*Hope is the feathered thing*).

5. La esperanza es una cosa de plumas (*Hope is a thing with feathers*).

6. La esperanza es algo de plumas (*Hope is something made up of feathers*).

7. La esperanza es esa cosa con plumas (*Hope is that thing with feathers*).

(7 is Josefa Toribio's suggestion.)

2 es traducción literal de 1, pero no es semánticamente equivalente a 1.

3, 4, 5, 6, y 7 son traducciones alternativas de 1, pero no equivalentes a 1.

Estas traducciones no parecen satisfacer el PES.

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University at Buffalo

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## The Dialogue

Carla Merino-Rajme

1. Let me begin by thanking Susanna Siegel and the Observatorio for organizing and hosting this event and all of you for participating. My comments will be brief.
  2. When I was a Masters student at UNAM in Mexico, there was a discussion on whether or not it would be appropriate for the university to allow students to write their theses/dissertations in English. Amongst the reasons offered in favor of this were: (i) that it would be easier for students to use the materials from their theses/dissertations as part of their applications to graduate programs in the US and UK; and (ii) that this would give them the chance to further develop their English proficiency. The conclusion of this discussion was that students should not be allowed to write their theses/dissertations in English. This is something I fully agree with. In my opinion, as has already been mentioned today, it is valuable to foster philosophy in Spanish. Also, translating one's work into a different language can be advantageous.
  3. However, I do think that philosophy students who attempt to insert themselves into a predominantly English speaking philosophical community and whose native language is Spanish might face some disadvantages. For instance, it seems to me (and this is a thought shared by others) that there might be implicit biases in place against people that speak English with a Spanish accent. Let me emphasize that, here, hard data would be needed to either support or disprove this idea. It is worth mentioning, however, that if these sorts of biases were in place, it would not be a trivial problem—it is well known, for instance, that philosophy is a discipline with few women. This suggests that disadvantages like these, even if small, might make an important difference on how well native Spanish speakers integrate into the philosophical community.
  4. However, I fully agree with Josefa Toribio that victimization would NOT be the solution to this kind of problem. What, then, can be done to avoid victimization while responsibly acknowledging that this type of problems might exist? Tentatively, and with the main aim of sparking a discussion, let me suggest the following:
    - (a) Foster philosophy in Spanish speaking countries. The idea would be to reach out to more people and to foster high quality philosophy in Spanish. While this proposal might seem obvious, it is worth noting that, for instance, the number of philosophy and critical thinking requirements in high school and undergraduate levels in Mexico—as Laura Pérez just mentioned—has been decreasing. Perhaps this is a place where we could make a difference.
    - (b) The second thought has to do with a practical concern discussed during a previous session. It was then suggested that it might be prudent to encourage a student to publish her work in English, given that the most prestigious and widely read journals are published in this language. How, then, could we foster high quality philosophy in Spanish? Perhaps here we have a situation in which it
- 2
- might be best to divide and conquer. While it might be advantageous for a philosopher to publish in English early on in her career (i.e. this might make it easier for her to find a job or get tenure—though this, of course, depends on the individual's aims), once she has established herself, she could aim at publishing in both languages. The same seems to be the case for promoting philosophy in



Spanish, getting involved in attracting Spanish speakers into philosophy, and fostering bilingual encounters and exchanges, such as this one. The proposal then is for philosophers to focus on developing their work and securing stable positions during the early stages of their careers and, during later stages, become more involved in leading efforts like these. This might be a feasible way in which we can all contribute to producing more top quality philosophy in Spanish and bringing more linguistic diversity into our discipline.

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El Diálogo

Carla Merino-Rajme

1. Quisiera comenzar agradeciendo a Susanna Siegel y al Observatorio por organizar este evento y a todos ustedes por su participación. Seré breve en mis comentarios.

2. Cuando era estudiante de maestría en la UNAM en México, hubo una discusión sobre si sería apropiado que esta universidad permitiera a sus estudiantes escribir tesis en inglés.

Entre las razones que se ofrecían a favor de esta idea se encontraban las siguientes: (i) esto haría más fácil para los estudiantes utilizar el material de sus tesis en sus solicitudes a programas de posgrado en Estados Unidos y el Reino Unido; y (ii) esto les daría la oportunidad de desarrollar su competencia en el idioma inglés. Al final, la conclusión fue que no se debería permitir a los estudiantes escribir sus tesis en inglés. Esto es algo con lo que yo estoy completamente de acuerdo. Creo, como otras personas lo han dicho ya durante este evento, que fomentar la filosofía en español es valioso y que la tarea de traducción a otro idioma puede también resultar provechosa.

3. Creo, sin embargo, que podrían haber desventajas que un estudiante de filosofía, cuyo idioma nativo es el español, enfrente al intentar integrarse a una comunidad filosófica predominantemente de habla inglesa. Por ejemplo, me parece (y éste es un pensamiento que otros comparten) que podrían haber sesgos implícitos que afectan a hablantes del inglés que tienen un acento hispanico. En este punto, quisiera enfatizar que sería importante tener estudios que respaldaran o desacreditaran esta idea. Vale la pena mencionar, sin embargo, que no sería trivial si este tipo de sesgos estuvieran presentes. Es bien conocido, por ejemplo, que la filosofía es una disciplina con pocas mujeres. Esto sugiere que desventajas como éstas, por más pequeñas, podrían tener un impacto importante en qué tan bien se integran individuos hispanohablantes a la comunidad filosófica.

4. Sin embargo, estoy en total acuerdo con Josefa Toribio en que la victimización NO sería la solución a este problema. ¿Qué puede hacerse entonces para enfrentar responsablemente esta situación sin caer en la victimización? Tentativamente y con el fin de abrir la discusión, permítanme sugerir lo siguiente:

(a) Promover la filosofía en países de habla hispana. La idea es, por un lado, tratar de que la enseñanza de filosofía alcance a una población más amplia y, por el otro, fomentar que se practique filosofía de la más alta calidad en español.

Mientras que esta propuesta pudiera parecer obvia, vale la pena mencionar que, por ejemplo, el número de requisitos de filosofía a nivel de bachillerato y licenciatura en México—como Laura Pérez mencionó—están decreciendo.

(b) La segunda idea tiene que ver con una cuestión práctica que también se puso ya sobre la mesa. Se sugirió que tal vez sea prudente alentar a un estudiante a

publicar su trabajo en inglés, dado que las revistas más reconocidas y de mayor difusión son publicadas en este idioma. ¿Cómo fomentar entonces filosofía de

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alta calidad en español? Tal vez tengamos aquí una situación en la que convenga “dividir y conquistar”. Mientras que puede ser provechoso para una filósofa publicar en inglés su trabajo al principio de su carrera (i.e. esto puede ayudarle a conseguir más fácilmente un trabajo o a asegurar una posición permanente en una Universidad—aunque esto, por supuesto, depende de los propósitos de cada individuo), una vez que ella ha conseguido una posición estable en su carrera, podría tratar de publicar en ambos idiomas. Lo mismo sería el caso para otras actividades como el fomento de la filosofía en español o la promoción de encuentros e intercambios bilingües, como el evento de hoy. La propuesta, entonces, consiste en enfocarse primero en desarrollar investigación filosófica de alta calidad y asegurar una posición estable y, una vez que esto se ha logrado, involucrarse más en esfuerzos de este tipo. Esta podría ser una manera plausible de producir más filosofía de alta calidad en español y lograr una mayor diversidad lingüística en nuestra disciplina.