# DIFFICULTIES AND CONSTRAINTS IN TRANSLATING PHILOSOPHICAL TEXTS. MECHANISMS OF RECEPTION AND THE (IN)STABILITY OF MEANING

Cecilia-Iuliana VÂRLAN
„Ovidius" University of Constanţa
varlan_c@yahoo.com

**Abstract:**

The present paper emphasizes the difficulties in translating philosophical texts in general, with a special focus on Romanian translations of German philosophical writings.

Translators of philosophical texts face a dilemma, since they are compelled to oscillate between two translation principles: that of transferring an unaltered message on the one hand, and that of preserving the style which defines the subjectivity of the text, on the other.

In order to overcome such constraints, a thorough understanding of the text message is needed, which raises the issue of the essential role of the reception process in understanding the meaning of a text, especially a philosophical one. We further focus on reception mechanisms and the (in)stability of meaning in the context of philosophical debate and literary critique, since a deeper understanding of these complex mechanisms is extremely useful both during the translation process and when analysing and assessing a translation as a product.

**Key words**:

Translation; German philosophy; reception mechanisms; (in)stability of meaning.

The typological categorization of a philosophical text as literary or non-literary has been the subject of debate among translation theoreticians, who initially considered it to fall into the category of non-literary writings, which included technical or pragmatic texts, alongside scientific, juridical or publicist ones. This consideration was based on the axiom governing informative texts, according to which rendering the underlying message of the text – including a philosophical text – prevails over the form in which the message is presented. Consequently, the translation of a philosophical text would be conditioned by emphasis on the reception of the text and the correct transfer of the message it contains.



BDD-A3961 © 2014 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-26 16:59:44 UTC)

According to P. Newmark, and in the tradition of E. A. Nida, semantic translation preserves the source expression in the target language, regardless of the text type (be it philosophical, religious, political, scientific, juridical, technical or literary), while communicative translation focuses on the win/loss ratio at a morphological, syntactical, lexical, or stylistic level. This ratio and the principle of "no win, no loss", as P. Newmark expressed it, are the main rules that should influence translators' choices of translation options, with only one objective – to preserve the meaning of the original text at all costs, and one principle – "no loss, no gain". Thus, P. Newmark considers translation to be the *"craft"* of replacing a message produced in one language with the same message produced in another language, an action which nevertheless implies *"a kind of loss of meaning*" and which induces a permanent dialectic tension derived from the "*claims*" of both languages involved in the translation process.[1]

Magda Jeanrenaud analysed the textual features of philosophical discourse, which she described as a distinct text type that requires specific translation decisions and techniques. She also referred to the variety of opinions on the subject, opinions which are nevertheless consensual in acknowledging the fact that the traditional binary dissociation of pragmatic and literary texts should be overridden.[2]

In his *Traduire: théorèmes pour la traduction* (1979), Jean-René Ladmiral, a French philosopher and translator, built his translation system upon the opposition: literary texts *vs.* technical texts.[3] But being an experienced translator of philosophy, he realized that the translation of philosophical writings falls somewhere between the translation of literary and that of non-literary texts. According to J-R Ladmiral, a philosophical text could be considered a literary text, in the broader sense, but also a technical one, given the specific technical jargon of its discourse, yet clearly not this either, given its subjectivity, *i.e.* the speaking subject of the text is

[1] Peter Newmark, 1995, *Approaches to Translation,* New York a.o.: Prentice Hall International, p. 7. *Cf.* Eugene A. Nida, 1964, *Towards a Science of Translating*, Leiden: E. J. Brill and E. Nida, Charles R. Taber, 1969, *The Theory and Practice of Translation,* Leiden: E.J. Brill, pp. 154-168.

[2] Magda Jeanrenaud, *Traducerea filozofiei, filozofia traducerii,* in: Paul Ricouer, 2005, *Despre traducere*, Iaşi: Editura Polirom, p. 6.

[3] Jean-René Ladmiral, 1994, *Traduire: théorèmes pour la traduction*, Paris: Gallimard. J-R Ladmiral is a Germanist scholar who mainly translated texts from German philosophy – I. Kant, Fr. Nietzsche, J. Habermas.



**BDD-A3961 © 2014 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române**
**Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-26 16:59:44 UTC)**

present within the text itself.[4] Consequently, translators of philosophical texts face a dilemma, since they are compelled to oscillate between two translation principles: that of transferring an unaltered message on the one hand, and that of preserving the style which defines the subjectivity of the text, on the other.

Mircea Flonta also addresses the topic of dilemmas in the translation of philosophy. On the problem of typological categorization, the Romanian philosopher states that philosophical writings occupy a position between the two extremes of the linguistic spectrum: scientific writings and literary texts[5].

He goes on to specify that, from the stylistic point of view, some philosophical writings are closer to technical texts, i.e. the representative texts of Anglo-Saxon analytical philosophy, while others are more poetic, such as the philosophical writings of some German-speaking authors, whom he sees as highly innovative since they force the language by creating new linguistic structures and phrases in order to express new meanings.[6] According to Mircea Flonta, a pure translation, defined as the complete recovery and re-verbalization of the original text meaning and style, is impossible in the case of philosophical texts, since they are - axiomatically speaking - open to interpretation.[7]

Analysing Romanian translations of Immanuel Kant's work, M. Flonta discusses the subjective factors that influence the translator's reception process in the pre-translation phase: the degree of familiarity of the translator with the work of the author whose work he is translating, with secondary sources of commentaries and critical reading, or with the social, cultural and philosophical context in which the respective work was produced. Thus, the translator's attitude, in relation to the target public and the ratio of fidelity to treason, would be deeply influenced by the reception process, which in its turn is decidedly dependent on the above-mentioned degree of familiarity. Should the translator therefore aim for a faithful, unaltered translation, striving to achieve maximum familiarity with the specific zeitgeist and expectations of the target public of the period when the original text was created (not to mention the different cultural space–

[4] Magda Jeanrenaud, *op. cit.*, p. 11.
[5] Mircea Flonta, 1997, *Traducere şi comunicare interculturală. Cărări înguste şi dileme ale traducerii filosofice*, Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, p. 5.
[6] *Id.*, p. 6.
[7] *Id.*, p. 5.



BDD-A3961 © 2014 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-26 16:59:44 UTC)

accounting for the target public in the cultural space in which the original was created)? Or should they favour a translation that is more appropriate to the time (or once again the space) in which it is produced, thus being more intelligible and accessible to *its* target public, but less faithful to the original text? Moreover, should the translator adopt a literal translation, which - in the case of philosophical texts - has the advantage of preserving the ambiguity of the original, to the detriment of naturalness and accessibility? Or a free translation, which would be more natural and accessible, albeit the result of some degree of interpretation, whether consciously acknowledged or not, associated (possibly) with a culture liable to interpretation? Considering the multitude of factors that influence and restrict the translator's comprehension of a philosophical text, M. Flonta asserts that philosophical translations can only ever be *versions* of the original.[8]

Besides the above-mentioned dilemmas, a further subjective factor enters the equation, *i.e.* the translator's skill in finding appropriate lexical and stylistic means (if available in the target language!) and their creativity in inventing new ones, which should not come across as artificial or laborious. A major role is played here by the intercultural aspect of the translation as an act of communication between two cultures with a certain distance between them, measured not in units of length, but in the means of expression that both languages possess at given stages in their development[9]. In this regard, M. Flonta considered the successful outcome of English translations from Immanuel Kant's work to be due not only to the similarity between Old German and Anglo-Saxon, but also to the fact that Latin derivatives - existent in both languages (*deduction*, *principle*, *transcendental*, *apperception*, *association*, etc.) - were extensively used by the German philosopher in his fundamental work, *Critique of Pure Reason*. Alongside syntax also taken from Latin, I. Kant used Latin equivalents even

[8] *Id.*, p. 6.

[9] *Id.*, pp. 10-11. Mircea Flonta's analysis of the development of the Romanian language in the nineteenth century reminded us that, at the time when Mihai Eminescu was translating from I. Kant, the transfer difficulties were enormous, since the distance between the two languages was considerable, leading Constantin Noica, the famous Romanian philosopher, to declare that the Romanian language of that time was *"philosophically untried*". *Cf.* C. Noica, 'Introducere', in: Mihai Eminescu, 1975, *Lecturi kantiene. Traduceri din Critica Raţiunii Pure*, edited by C. Noica and Al. Surdu, Bucharest: Editura Univers, p. XXIV.



BDD-A3961 © 2014 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-26 16:59:44 UTC)

for words that already existed in German (for instance: *intuitio* instead of *Anschauung* and *representatio* instead of *Vorstellung*).[10]

The lexicon of philosophical writings, especially of those from the German speaking world, raises considerable difficulties when translating them into other languages, Romanian being no exception. The German language is extremely rich in means of expression and thus very difficult to transfer exactly, since many items do not have an equivalent in Romanian. M. Flonta gives the example of German nouns that generally express a quality and are derived from adjectives by adding the suffix '*–heit'*: '*Schönheit*' (Rom. 'frumuseţe', 'calitatea de a fi frumos', Engl. 'beauty', 'the quality of being beautiful'), '*Freiheit*' (Rom. 'libertate', 'calitatea de a fi liber', Engl.'freedom', 'the quality of being free'). The translators' dilemma begins when there is no Romanian equivalent for the German derivative, as is the case in the following example: '*das Gegebene'* (Rom. 'datul', Engl. 'the given') – '*die Gegebenheit'* (Rom. 'calitatea de a fi dat'?, Engl. 'the quality of being given'?)[11]. In such cases, translators are left with the alternatives of either lexically enriching the target language by introducing new means of expression – which might appear too technical and artificial – or resorting to explanatory paraphrase which might overload and burden the text.

The same kind of constraints emerge in the case of equating the German term '*Deduktion'* with the Romanian '*deducţie*' (Engl. 'deduction') through direct borrowing. At the time when I. Kant used the respective word in his work, it referred to a kind of systematic report (Rom.'*expunere sistematică"*[12]) and was juridical jargon, a fact which is no longer true today. For a deeper understanding of the text, contemporary readers should be provided with either a special term or paraphrasing accompanied by an explanatory note from the translator.

In addition to specific terminology predominantly borrowed from Latin, I. Kant made use of common German words, to which he attributed new meanings. For example, the German word '*Gemüt*' could have a wide range of Romanian equivalents, depending on the context:'*suflet*' (Engl. 'soul'), '*inimă*' (Engl. 'heart'), '*sentiment*' (Engl. 'sentiment'/'feeling'), '*fire*' (Engl. 'character'), '*spirit*' (Engl. 'spirit'/'temper'), '*caracter*' (Engl.

[10] Mircea Flonta, *op. cit.*, p. 8.
[11] *Id*., p. 9.
[12] *Id*., p. 12.



BDD-A3961 © 2014 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-26 16:59:44 UTC)

'character'). This is an example of the equivalence type *eins-zu-viele (one-to-many)*[13], described by W. Koller. None of the above mentioned translation solutions seem capable of covering the full meaning of the original word in all contexts it may occur. Hence, M. Flonta suggests that such a word should not be regarded as a special term, but rather translated contextually[14], which was W. Koller's opinion as well.

Contextual translation once more raises the issue of the essential role of the reception process in understanding the meaning of a text, especially a philosophical one. We shall focus next on reception mechanisms and the (in)stability of meaning in the context of philosophical debate and literary critique, since a deeper understanding of these complex mechanisms is extremely useful both during the translation process and when analysing and assessing a translation as a product.

Since "*translation is a deconstruction and reconstruction of the original"*[15], then the term '*deconstruction*' mainly relates to the efforts of clarifying polysemy or semantic concentrations within the text. In other words, translators are primarily readers who interpret messages for retransmission to other readers, usually in the same cultural space. On the one hand, thorough reception of the source text plays a key-role in producing a satisfactory target text. On the other hand, the issue of the (in)stability of meaning should be addressed, since philosophical language exhibits both technical and poetic features. Irina Mavrodin's considerations are relevant in this context. She places the two types of language, technical and poetic, at either end of an imaginary line and describes them in terms of stability and autonomy of meaning. At one end of the line we have technical language, where the autonomy of words is not debated and the stability of meaning is relatively strong. Hence, translators are not to guess or invent lexemes, but rather identify them in accordance with the existing definitions and their fixed usage. At the other end, that of poetic language, the instability of meanings or more precisely acknowledgement of this instability should transcend the prejudice that sememes are fixed once and

[13] Werner Koller, 1992, *Einführung in die Übersetzungswissenschaft*, 4., völlig neu bearb. Aufl., Heidelberg, Wiesbaden, Quelle und Meyer, pp. 228-240.
[14] Mircea Flonta, *op. cit*., p. 12.
[15] See, for example, Ioana Ieronim, in an interview published by Angela Martin entitled '*Traducerea: vocaţie, profesie, hobby*?' [*Translation: vocation, profession, hobby?*], in: *Cultura*, no. 215 of 19.03.2009, *http://revistacultura.ro/cultura.php?articol=3921* (Aug. 30, 2013).



**BDD-A3961 © 2014 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române**
**Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-26 16:59:44 UTC)**

forever by their usage and that there is only one meaning, or a single 'good' translation, for each word.[16]

Regardless of their motivation for reading, a reader - and by extension a translator - is constantly engaged in a complex process of negotiation with the author and with the text itself to interpret and understand the content. The intellectual process of assessing the underlying message takes place both during and after reading and is an active process, influenced by numerous factors including cultural context, tradition, and the reader's (literary) experience. The issue of finding the necessary means to decoding a textual message has been discussed over the years by philosophers, reception theorists and literary critics, who have successively shifted emphasis from the literary work to the author and more recently to the reader as the most important player in the act of interpreting meanings.

Until the 1960s, the reception process for interpreting any work was considered empathetic; the text was autonomous, its meaning fixed and waiting to be deciphered. The reception process was highly determined by tradition and by the author's personality and prestige. Readers were rather passive and often received interpretation models from the authors themselves.

In 1970, Hans Robert Jauss, a German academic, placed his concept of the 'horizon of expectations' at the very centre of his reception theory, thus reconciling the traditional author-work dyad with its audience.[17] A key term in reception theory, the horizon of expectations models the process of reception and interpretation of messages based on aesthetics. H. R. Jauss's theory of reception is based on the initial frame of reference within which the work was created, therefore the reader can and must recreate the horizon of expectations of the original audience in order to avoid a superficial reception resulting from their own subjectivity.[18] The concept 'horizon of expectation' implies the existence of cultural codes - derived from tradition or from literary schools and critiques – that help readers to recognize and assess messages. It is remarkable that this key concept applies not only to

[16] Irina Mavrodin, 2006, *Despre traducere: literal şi în toate sensurile*, Craiova: Editura Scrisul Românesc, p. 15.

[17] Mona Momescu, Alina Ologu, 2000/2001, *Introducere în teroria literaturii. Note de curs*, Constanţa: Ovidius University Press, p.77. *Cf.* Vincent B. Leitch, (gen. ed.), 2001, *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, New York, London: W.W. Norton & Company, p. 1550.

[18] Hans Robert Jauss, *Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory*, in: Vincent B. Leitch, *op. cit.*, pp. 1550 - 1564.



**BDD-A3961 © 2014 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române**
**Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-26 16:59:44 UTC)**

readers, but to authors as well (including here the authors of original texts in case of translations), since they possess the same cultural code as their readers (including here the translators as readers). Consequently, a permanent regulation mechanism exists between emitter and receiver or, in other words, between the author of the original text and the translator.

Modern reception theories emphasize the text instead of the work. Its meaning, as the result of a negotiation process, crystallizes nowhere else but in the reader. Moreover, it is no longer a continual process, but a sequential one, and it depends on the respective moment of reception. The reader is never 'innocent' and the text is never autonomous:

> "*To read is always to read in relation to other texts, in relation to the codes that are the products of these texts and go to make up a culture*"[19].

The instability of language and the temporariness of meaning were addressed philosophically for the first time in the Post-structuralist era. Theoreticians like J. Derrida, J-F Lyotard and M. Foucault examined sources of meaning other than the author by rejecting principles of universalism, rationality, legitimacy and previously established justifications[20].

Jacques Derrida described the relationship between language and the real world and developed his theory on the fact that any written sign is repeatable and can be extracted from its context. Therefore, the meaning of signs cannot be contained within, or reduced to, a finite context[21]. A sign – written or spoken – becomes functional not through its immediate presence, but rather through its spacing from other signs. For J. Derrida, spacing is not necessarily an empty space – a blank or an imperceptible pause between words in written or spoken language respectively – but rather the '*difference*' that Saussure emphasized when discussing the linguistic value of signs.[22] In *Speech and Phenomena* (1967), J. Derrida deliberately coined the new term '*différanc*e'[23] to emphasize the fact that a sign refers to

[19] Jonathan Culler, 2001, *The Pursuit of Signs. Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction*, London: Routledge, p. 13.

[20] Beatrice Hanssen, '*Critical Theory and Poststructuralism: Habermas and Foucault*', in: Fred Rush (ed.), 2004, *The Cambridge Companion to Critical Theory*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 280.

[21] Julian Wolfreys, Ruth Robbins, Kenneth Womack, 2006, *Key Concepts in Literary Theory*, Second Edition, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, p. 103.

[22] Ferdinand de Saussure, 1998, *Curs de lingvistică generală* [A Course in General Linguistics]. Translated by Irina Izverna Tarabac, Iaşi: Editura Polirom, p. 133.

[23] *Apud* Barry Stocker, 2006, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Derrida on Deconstruction*, New York: Routledge, p. 175. The term was so subtle that the translator of



BDD-A3961 © 2014 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-26 16:59:44 UTC)

nothing else but other signs and can thus never reach semantic or syntagmatic stability.

The polysemy of the French word '*supplement*' (which may refer either to a supplement or a substitute) offered J. Derrida the occasion to philosophically review the way style articulates through the language and reality of an author[24]. The Derridean concept of writing implies the presence of an absence, *i.e.* the presence of the signifier (the written word) in the physical absence of its referent in the real world, which is substituted by the former (or added to it?). The phrase '*il n'y a pas de hors-text'*, which J. Derrida himself calls central to his essay[25], becomes a point of reference from which textuality is defined as a structure that is infinitely multiplied in itself, a kind of a e*n abyme* representation of presence. That presence is specifically suggested by the concept of '*supplement*', which becomes a kind of a *"blind spot"*[26] in the respective text or "*the not-seen that opens and limits visibility*"[27]. Herein lies the paradox of reception, because it is precisely the language and the reality of an author that bestow surprising diversity of meaning upon a word. Readers are able to recognize the possibility that the message rendered might be other than that intended by the author; in other words, one should ask oneself whether the author, having used a specific word, intended to say more, less, or something else. Hence, when a context is selected in order to stabilize the meaning, the reader (and the translator as well) recognizes at the same time the multiple variants that the context offers. The meaning thus becomes extremely relative and unsettled, since it depends on the specific moment at which the reader negotiates it. In such specific cases, one important issue – according to J. Derrida – concerns the trajectory of the meaning from author to reader. As the text is being produced, the author intentionally uses specific words,

---

the English edition did not notice it at its first occurrence in the text and translated it as 'difference'. It was not until the next chapter when he realized the misspelling was deliberate and drew readers' attention to '*différance' as a neologism introduced by the author. Cf.* Barry Stocker, *op. cit*, p. 175.

[24] Jacques Derrida, '*Of Grammatology*', in: Vincent B. Leitch, *op. cit.*, pp. 1822-1830.

[25] *Id.*, p. 1829. The authors of the cited anthology discussed the English translation alternatives for the phrase, as follows: '*there is nothing outside the text'*, a literal and correct translation, but nevertheless deceptive because it is based upon the assumption that an *inside/outside* constraint exists, which was exactly what J. Derrida argued about. Or: '*there is no outside-text'*, a translation that is non-literal, but closer to the intention of the French philosopher.

[26] *Id.*, p. 1830.

[27] *Ibid*.



BDD-A3961 © 2014 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-26 16:59:44 UTC)

whose meaning is later negotiated by the reader by selecting only one meaning at a time in order to bring clarity to their analysis of the text. Nevertheless, in retaining only one meaning, the reader is conscious that other virtual possibilities exist and therefore attempts to justify the choice that they have made.

Thus a Derridean critical reading should go beyond tradition and search the text for its *signifying structure*, which the French philosopher described as the relationship between what authors can and cannot control in terms of the language patterns that they use. It is thus extremely important for translators, in their capacity as readers, to recognize the kind of relationship J. Derrida described. This is very difficult since authors themselves are not aware of it due to its difference from the relationship they consciously establish with the linguistic elements they use in their exchanges with the reality of which they are a part. Fatally, J. Derrida's critical reading, in its attempt to make the invisible visible and disclose the essence of that signifying structure, is limited by the same text/language constraints because it results in nothing else but a text whose discourse cannot dominate the language and the reality in which the text has been written.

In 1968, Roland Barthes announced the 'death of the author'[28], leaving the reader to derive meaning from a text, which is thus an absence of voices and which begins only when the author ceases to exist. The message of the text is not to be found in the author, but in the polysemy of the language itself (see J. Derrida), that only the reader can detect and understand in all its virtual possibilities. For R. Barthes, the text has lost its theological character; it is no longer the vehicle for a unique message transmitted by the author who is a holder of absolute truth. The text is seen now as a multi-dimensional space in which meanings are not fixed; they exist for very brief moments and they dissolve immediately afterwards. From this vision, R. Barthes attributes a revolutionary character to literature which denies stable meanings and, with them, God and His manifestations: philosophy, science and ethics.

A year later, Michel Foucault examined the empty space left by the disappearance of the author that had been previously announced by R. Barthes and investigated the functions fulfilled by the author as an autonomous category within textual and discourse analysis.[29] M. Foucault observed that, even though the author has for a long time been considered the source of the text at its most profound level, until 1500 the function of

[28] Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author", in: Vincent B. Leitch, *op. cit.*, pp. 1466-1470.
[29] Michael Foucault, "What Is an Author", in: Vincent B. Leitch, *op. cit.*, pp. 1622-1636.



BDD-A3961 © 2014 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-26 16:59:44 UTC)

the author was irrelevant to the understanding and interpretation of a text. Even today, claims M. Foucault, the author's importance varies according to the field to which the text belongs.

Stanley Fish, an American literary theorist, revolutionized reception theory by attributing meaning to the reader instead of to the text. In his essay, *Interpreting the* '*Variorum'* (1976)[30], S. Fish introduces the concept of *interpretive communities*[31], which are perceived as entities that can grow or decay, with individuals able to move from one to another. This concept explains the stability of reception for a specific group of readers (they read a text in the same way because they belong to the same interpretive community). It also explains the fact that a reader can adopt various interpretation strategies, thus creating various texts from the very same source (because the reader has belonged to various interpretive communities throughout their life).

In *The Postmodern Condition* (1979), Jean François Lyotard debated the question of progress, which he saw as a march of the entire world towards a utopian future[32]; he advocated diversity and plurality as they manifest themselves in local differences. In the tradition of Ludwig Wittgenstein, J. F. Lyotard called these local differences "language games" and argued that there was no possibility of comparing them. Therefore it was not possible to create a hierarchy of language games, as language depends only on the context (see also J. Derrida) and the meaning depends on the moment the text was created.

In the same philosophical tradition as J. Derrida, but with anarchic and anti-hierarchic emphasis, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari undermined, among other things, the idea of conceptual stability[33]. In *Introduction: Rhizome,* the two authors introduce the concept of *rhisomatic thought*[34] characterized by expansion, conquer, variation, interconnectivity etc. The rhisomatic thought was opposed to the patriarchal, arborescent conception of knowledge, which establishes clear-cut filiations and therefore hierarchies.[35] As far as literature is concerned G. Deleuze and F. Guattari were not searching for a particular meaning, but rather trying to detect those

[30] Vincent B. Leitch, *op. cit.,* pp. 2071-2089.
[31] Stanley Fish, "Interpreting the *Variorum*", in: Vincent B. Leitch, *op. cit.,* pp. 2071-2089.
[32] *Id*., p. 1610.
[33] *Id*., p. 1594.
[34] Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, "A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia", in: Vincent B. Leitch, *op. cit.,* pp. 1601-1609.
[35] *Id*., p. 1607.



BDD-A3961 © 2014 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-26 16:59:44 UTC)

"*lines of flight"*[36] along which authors and their texts eluded the imposed order. That is actually a *de-territorialization* from the so-called official culture and a *re-territorialization* somewhere else; generally speaking, the de-territorialization process allows the transition from the verb *to be* (characteristic of arborescent filiation) to the priority of the conjunction *and* in such expressions as *and…and…and…*(characteristic of rhizomes). In other words, this process proposes "*an eschewing of monolithic ideas in favour of 'disjunctive syntheses' that allow for genuine interconnection*."[37]

For G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, a book is a multiplicity, an assembly of various fluxes with multiple directions. A clear distinction between the three classical instances – the book, the author and the world - is not possible anymore.[38] The abdication of this classical trinity and the placing of emphasis on the multiplicity of fluxes – semiotic, material or social – that build a book in the two authors' vision, leads to a change in the semiotics of perception: one must see things from the inside and not as isolated or from an external perspective.

Jean René Ladmiral subscribed to the same rationale as J. Derrida and his successors, considering it a real 'scandal' to translate philosophy, since translation means a series of dissociations of the concepts of philosophy with the respective signifiers in the source language, followed by a series of reconstructions into foreign signifiers in the target language.[39]

J. R. Ladmiral distinguished between (at least) two types of constraints derived from the necessity to verbalize philosophical concepts: first, at the level of the author of a philosophical text, who has to frame the concepts of his thought into the patterns the source language has to offer; next, a translator needs to understand the concepts perfectly (by reading signifiers only, in the source language) in order to transfer their meaning, if possible, into signifiers in the target language. The target reader is the ultimate receiver in whom the intended meaning of the author of the original text - should finally crystallize. This means altogether that just another level of conceptual alteration is added. J. R. Ladmiral's alleged 'scandal' derives precisely from these consecutive alterations that philosophical concepts endure from the moment they leave the author's mind. One partial solution to this problem involves retaining terms from the source language unaltered

[36] *Id*., pp. 1601-1609.
[37] *Cf.* Julian Wolfreys, Ruth Robbins, Kenneth Womack, *op. cit.*, p. 31.
[38] Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, "A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia", in: Vincent B. Leitch, *op. cit.*, pp. 1606-1607.
[39] *Apud* Magda Jeanrenaud, *op. cit.*, p. 10.



**BDD-A3961 © 2014 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române**
**Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-26 16:59:44 UTC)**

in the translation[40], but then explaining them in the target language by using explanatory footnotes or compensation and adaptation strategies.

After reviewing all these perspectives on reception mechanisms and the issues of meaning (in)stability, it seems now that the work of a translator – especially a translator of literary or philosophical texts – cannot reach perfection. As we have previously discussed, difficulties generated by the typological framing of a philosophical text are only added to the constraints imposed by the reception process and the issues of meaning (in)stability. Mary Snell-Hornby considered that equivalence in translation was an illusion (something that cannot be reached) and proposed the term *approximation*[41]instead. When equivalence is discussed, the horizon expectations of the target audience should be taken into account and the translation should be executed accordingly. This means that different texts will generate different definitions for the translation equivalence, and this may apply even to the same text if it has been successively translated at great intervals of time or for different purposes. Consequently, a good translation may very probably be that which is most appropriate for the needs of its target audience and for the period of time when it is executed.

**Acknowledgement**

This work was supported by the project "Sustainable performance in doctoral and post-doctoral research - PERFORM" co-funded from the European Social Fund through the Development of Human Resources Operational Programme 2007-2013, contract no. POSDRU/159/1.5/S/138963.

**Bibliography**

CULLER, Jonathan, 2001, *The Pursuit of Signs. Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction*, London: Routledge.

FLONTA, Mircea, 1997, *Traducere şi comunicare interculturală. Cărări înguste şi dileme ale traducerii filosofice*, Bucureşti: Editura Academiei Române.

[40] For instance, *Weltanschauung* and *Gestalt* are terms that have been maintained *unaltered* (not translated) in translations from German philosophical texts and remained so in universal thought as well.

[41]Mary Snell-Hornby, „Übersetzen, Sprache, Kultur“, in: Mary Snell-Hornby (Hrsg.), 1993, *Übersetzungswissenschaft – eine Neuorientierung. Zur Integrierung von Theorie und Praxis*, Tübingen: Francke Verlag, p. 13.



BDD-A3961 © 2014 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-26 16:59:44 UTC)

JEANRENAUD, Magda, '*Traducerea filozofiei, filozofia traducerii*' (introductory study) in: Paul Ricoeur, 2005, *Despre traducere*, Iaşi: Editura Polirom.

KOLLER, Werner, 1992, *Einführung in die Übersetzungswissenschaft*, 4., völlig neu bearb. Aufl., Heidelberg, Wiesbaden: Quelle und Meyer.

LADMIRAL, Jean-René,1994, *Traduire: théorèmes pour la traduction*, Paris: Gallimard.

LEITCH, Vincent B. (gen. ed.), 2001, *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, New York, London: W.W. Norton & Company.

MARTIN, Angela, '*Traducerea: vocaţie, profesie, hobby?*', in: *Cultura*, magazine of Fundaţia Culturală Română, No. 215 of 19.03.2009, *http://revistacultura.ro/cultura.php?articol=3921* (Aug. 30, 2013).

MAVRODIN, Irina, 2006, *Despre traducere: literal şi în toate sensurile*, Craiova: Editura Scrisul Românesc.

MOMESCU, Mona, OLOGU, Alina, 2000/2001, *Introducere în teoria literaturii. Note de curs*, Constanţa: Ovidius University Press.

NEWMARK, Peter, 1995, *Approaches to Translation*, New York a.o.: Prentice Hall International.

NIDA, Eugene A., 1964, *Towards a Science of Translating*, Leiden: E. J. Brill

NIDA, E., TABER, Charles R., 1969, *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill.

NOICA C., 'Introducere', in: Mihai Eminescu, 1975, *Lecturi kantiene. Traduceri din Critica Raţiunii Pure*, edited by C. Noica and Al. Surdu, Bucureşti: Editura Univers, pp. V-XLIII.

RICOEUR, Paul, 2005, *Despre traducere*. Introductory study and translation by Magda Jeanrenaud. Preface by Domenico Jervolino, Iaşi: Editura Polirom.

RUSH, Fred (ed.), 2004, *The Cambridge Companion to Critical Theory*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

SAUSSURE, Ferdinand de, 1998, *Curs de lingvistică generală*. Translation by Irina Izverna Tarabac, Iaşi: Editura Polirom.

SNELL-HORNBY, Mary (Hrsg.), 1993, *Übersetzungswissenschaft – eine Neuorientierung. Zur Integrierung von Theorie und Praxis*, Tübingen: Francke Verlag.

STOCKER, Barry, 2006, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Derrida on Deconstruction*, Oxon, New York: Routledge.

WOLFREYS, Julian, ROBBINS, Ruth, WOMACK, Kenneth, 2006, *Key Concepts in Literary Theory*, Second Edition, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.



**BDD-A3961 © 2014 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române**
**Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-26 16:59:44 UTC)**