AN ARCHIMEDEAN POINT FOR PHILOSOPHY

SHYAM RANGANATHAN

Abstract: According to an orthodox account of meaning and translation, meaning is a property of expressions of a language, and translation is a matching of synonymous expressions across languages. This *linguistic account of translation* gives rise to well-known skeptical conclusions about translation, objectivity, meaning, and truth, but it does not conform to our best translational practices. In contrast, I argue for a textual account of meaning based on the concept of a *text-type* that *does* conform to our best translational practices. With their semantic function in view, text-types are Archimedean points for their respective disciplines. The text-type of philosophy is no exception. Culture-transcendent conceptual analysis can proceed on firm footing without having to deny the reality of radical cultural and linguistic difference by treating components of text-types as the concepts to be analyzed. Analyses of central philosophical concepts are provided as a means of adjudicating philosophical controversy.

Keywords: comparative philosophy, conceptual analysis, culture, incommensurability, indeterminacy, language, meaning, moral semantics, objectivity, philosophy, relativism, semantics, texts, text-types, translation, truth, W. V. O Quine.

Philosophers might be reluctant to talk about an Archimedean point for philosophy because of the widespread paradigm that underwrites much recent Western philosophy. This paradigm takes languages, or expressions of languages, to be the paradigm bearers of meaning, if not meaning itself. The trouble with this linguistic orientation is that languages are culturally and historically evolving phenomena. If meaning is a determinate property of languages, then it is difficult to keep the cultural relativity of meaning at bay. Those who have adopted a formal approach to semantics often regard meaning as the basic or systematic role that an expression has in a language (see Davidson 2001; 1996, 18; Salmon 2005). Perhaps the mathematical and scientific rigor of such an approach is supposed to save the objectivity of meaning. If so, however, it is not clear how. If meaning is a function of the basic or systematic role that an expression has in a language, meaning is linguistically relative.

Some philosophers believe that metaphysics can underwrite the objectivity of meaning and keep relativism at bay. This might not be successful. Terrance Horgan and Mark Timmons (1996) argue that explanations of

moral meaning by putative naturalistic referents of moral terms (Boyd 1988) results in relativism. In contrast to philosophers such as Saul Kripke (1980) and Hilary Putnam (1975), Joseph LaPorte reviews the history of science and argues that "natural-kind terms do change in meaning, as science progresses" (LaPorte 2004, 113). If this is true, the reality of the natural world is not able to prevent linguistic instability. This raises the specter of the incommensurability of scientific theories, for as scientific theory changes, so does meaning.

Intensionalists in conceiving meaning as metaphysically ideal hope to show that natural language poses no obstacle to the culture-transcendence of meaning (Katz 1990, 194–96; 1993, 177) and that natural languages are not constrained by substantive theses (Katz 2004, 189). But this is unpromising because there is strong evidence that natural languages reflect the cultural values of their speakers, which are anything but substantively or conceptually neutral (see Everett 2005). Linguistic anthropologists have long argued this (see Whorf 2001). They have also criticized languages as systems of metaphysical and cosmological representation because of their ideological and cultural foundations (Silverstein 1979).

We require a fundamental shift in our thinking about the ground of meaning not only if we are to assess objectively philosophical questions but also if we are to understand how epistemic endeavors such as science and philosophy can transcend the narrow confines of cultural contingency.

The alternative is to understand our best cases of meaning as *texts* of definite *types*. I derive the notion of a *text-type* from the translation-studies literature (see Holmes 1988, 74–76; Laviosa-Braithwaite 2001, 277–78; Neubert and Shreve 1992)—though my employment of the notion involves a considerable refinement. On the account I will urge, text-types are like genres, except that they often have institutional support of an international variety. Examples of text-types are poetry, the novel, mathematics, philosophy, and the natural sciences. Each such type of text specifies semantic considerations that a translator must appreciate to translate a text of that sort. Moreover, if anything can underwrite critical assessments of epistemic claims within a domain of inquiry, the text-type can. As text-types do not reduce to categories of grammar and are essential to translation in their respective domains of discourse, they can provide an Archimedean platform for their respective disciplines.

I would argue that philosophical concepts are incarnations of the text-type of philosophy. Their semantics consists in their role in texts of philosophy, which the translator must understand to translate philosophical texts accurately. With these concepts in view, questions of moral philosophy (long thought to be the most local and culturally relative of philosophical questions) can be resolved objectively.

My argument for this account of philosophical concepts—in particular, moral concepts—will proceed in two parts. In the first half of the article, I argue for a theory of translation and meaning informed by our

best translational practices. In the second half I set out what I call the *text-type account of philosophical concepts* and show how it can form the foundation for objective answers to philosophical questions. I then respond to some objections to my proposal.

Translation According to the Tradition

Call the traditional view of translation in the philosophical literature the "linguistic account of translation." It comes in two versions. The simplest version of this thesis holds that translation exchanges synonymous words across languages. This is usually called "literal translation." This contrasts with a sentential version, according to which translation substitutes synonymous sentences across languages. The terminological variant of this thesis is diffuse in the moral-semantics literature. There it is assumed that the translatability of moral claims from one language (called a "source language") into another (called a "target language") depends on their having moral terms with the same meaning (see Hare 1952, 146–49; Boyd 1988, 210; Dreier 1990, 8; Horgan and Timmons 1991; Wedgwood 2006, comments on "radical interpreter"; van Roojen 2006).

If we were to take literal translation seriously, we could only translate an English sentence like "this is good" into another language if that language has terms that mean what "this," "is," and "good" mean in English. Literal translation is generally impossible for two reasons. First, syntactic variations across languages make a word-for-word substitution across languages an unrealistic premise of translation. Differences of number, case, tense, gender, and word order are so great across languages that what is mandated syntactically in one language might be ruled out in another language. Syntactic differences are not simply syntactic differences. A language that employs gender injects into sentences a vector of meaning absent in nongendered languages. Second, the semantics of real words are responsive to culturally and historically specific factors rendering cross-linguistic synonymy unlikely. But yet, translation appears to be successful—no thanks to literal translation.

If translation works on cross-linguistic sentential synonymy, then we can ignore intrasentential differences between sentences in different languages, as long as we can secure synonymy at the sentential level. But this is impractical. Terminological differences across languages have palpable semantic effects on the meaning of sentences they constitute. The lack of some terminological equivalents across languages might be benign, but when one word has more than one possible correlate in a target language that partially diverge or oppose each other in meaning, the lack of clear cross-linguistic synonymy can cause trouble for translation at the sentential level. We might find ourselves with equally possible but incompatible translations of the same sentence because of a lack of determinate cross-linguistic synonyms at the terminological level.

Incompatible terminological translation occurs whenever there are not easy equivalents of words across languages. Mark Lance and John O'Leary-Hawthorne concoct an example (Lance and O'Leary-Hawthorne 1997, 44–47). Jacques Derrida argues that the Greek "pharmakon" used throughout Plato's dialogues cannot be easily translated because its significance ranges over "remedy," "recipe," "poison," and "drug" (Derrida 1981). One sociologist notes the example of certain islanders who have the same word for "half brother" and "pelican" (Lienhardt 1958). These significances are not compatible in English when it is a human's half brother that we are talking of. My *Ethics and the History of Indian Philosophy* (2007) addresses at length the Indic term "dharma," which though translatable as "ethics" and "moral" in philosophical contexts, is regarded by orthodox Indologists as having too many possible and conflicting translational correlates in English for accurate translation.

Terminological asymmetries did not trouble W. V. O. Quine. He heavily favored a sentential approach to translation because he saw words as having their meaning determined by their place in sentences (Quine 1996). The troubles for translation are different on his account.

Quine famously argues for the *indeterminacy of translation* by the example of the radical translator, a field linguist trying to understand and translate the language of a hitherto unstudied people. Quine reasoned that the empirical data are inadequate for the linguist's requirements. The effort to translate the native's utterances is buttressed by what he called "analytic hypotheses" that pair up observational sentences in a source language and a target language, but still the empirical data fall short. The results, on his account, are several "translation manuals" that translate a source language into a target language that are not all compatible with each other (Quine 1960, 27, 68–72). Some take Quine to be arguing that translation is merely underdetermined by observational data like all scientific theory (Chomsky 1969). Quine resisted this reading. For Quine, there can be translational controversies that are undecidable by *all* possible empirical data (Quine 1969b). So understood, the problem is not simply the contingent shortcomings of empirical data.

Quine's semantic holism explains this hard line. He writes that the indeterminacy of translation arises because of a "conflict of parts seen without the wholes." He continues: "The principle of indeterminacy of translation requires notice just because translation proceeds little by little and sentences are thought of as conveying meanings severally" (Quine 1960, 78–9). If the parts in question are sentences of languages, and the wholes are the languages themselves, then the indeterminacy of translation is the problem of finding cross-linguistic equivalents for items that have their full significance within their native language. In this comment, Quine strikes a common chord with many translation theorists (see Derrida 1981; Snell-Hornby 1988, 16–17).

The problem with linguistic accounts of translation is not their commitment to the notion that successful translation preserves meaning. The ideal of translation is to preserve meaning through semiotic change. This is what separates translation from paraphrase or adaptation and allows us to treat a translation as the work of the author and not a mere creation of a translator. Some "translations" will fail this ideal, and we will have grounds for criticizing them as being poor translations or perhaps not translations at all. But if a translation is successful as a translation, it is successful because it is semantically equivalent to its original. This might be a rare feat, but scholars agree that it has been accomplished. Scholars who employ translations to study and comment on the thoughts of authors who wrote in other languages implicitly accept the accuracy of the translations. On occasion, translations are regarded as successful for centuries. For instance, many Tibetan translations of Sanskrit Buddhist texts have been and continue to be prized by scholars as accurate and lucid translations of the original (see Tsering 1995). The trouble for the linguistic account of translation is not the viability and success of translation but its linguistic focus. Languages are all different. The notion that we can always recreate what is stated in one language with the resources of another language while preserving meaning is far from clear, whether or not semantic holism is correct.

One suggestion is to solve such trouble by the conceptual enrichment of a target language: simply introduce meanings in the target language that one requires to make translation successful. If we chose this path we would be admitting a certain defeat in translation (assuming the linguistic account) for we would have to contend that translation between some languages is not possible, unless the target language is changed. However, the conceptual enrichment of a language is not something that we can simply will as a means of solving translation. My argument here is not against the possibility of the conceptual enrichment of a language. Rather, the tradition provides us no practical account of how this happens in a manner that guarantees translational success.

If translation is indeterminate, then there is trouble on the horizon for all knowledge. Quine argued that if our best efforts at translation can result in conflicting, inconsistent, or unclear results, then we have reason to be skeptical that there is anything objective about translation (Quine 1960, 73). If translation aims at preserving meaning (Quine 1960, 32), then insuperable difficulties in translation suggest that there is nothing objective about the meaning of expressions (see Quine 1960, 26–27; Gaudet 2006). This did not trouble Quine. Though a scientific realist, he thought that science could get along by treating natural kind terms as constituting an essential part of the theory of a mature science (Quine 1969a). But it is unclear how science is immune from the semantic subjectivism or nihilism that Quine leads us to, for science makes use of language in its operation and relies on the meaningfulness of technical

and natural kind terms to get by. So interwoven is science with language that Thomas Kuhn was unwittingly able to turn Quinian criticisms of translation against science itself.

Kuhn deferred to Quine's account of translation as authoritative and argued that scientists of opposing paradigms are like members of different linguistic communities, and that their effort to communicate with each other is beset by the challenges of translation (Kuhn 1970, 202 n. 17). All try to translate the claims of the other into their own language, but problems beset the results for their concepts are defined by their role in their native theory (Kuhn 1970, 149). Kuhn concludes that scientific world views are *incommensurable* and moreover that they are untranslatable (Kuhn 1983, 670). If translation is our best test of the objectivity of meaning, then the inevitable failure of translation in the arena of science spells trouble for the objectivity of scientific discourse.

Translation and Text-Types

The accounts of translation discussed in the preceding section are versions of the linguistic account of translation. On this account the translator's job is to take one language (its words and sentences) and translate it into another. For instance, translators on this account translate English into German, and vice versa. This does not accurately characterize translation. It is a philosopher's fiction.

Translators translate texts, not languages. Texts are (usually) written with languages (however, they can also be composed of pictures or icons, for instance). But bare linguistic competence is not sufficient to translate a text accurately. Indeed, bare linguistic competence is not even sufficient to *read* most texts of importance. To translate a text accurately, the translator must not only have some competence in the source and target semiotic resources. He must also be an expert in the *type* of text being translated.

Examples of text-types include the novel, mathematics, the sciences, and philosophy. For a translator to be competent in translating a text, she must appreciate the type of text she is translating for this will direct her to reproduce a text in the target semiotic system that is *equivalent* to the original relative to that type. A text-type is like a rule that leads us to identify features of the original (called the ''source text'') to be preserved in a translation (called ''a target text'').

In recognizing types, the question arises as to how we can individuate text-types. In theory there are innumerable types. Some types are exemplified by paradigm cases such as commercial advertisements, jokes, and press briefings.[1] Other types of texts are exemplified by internationally read and transmitted canons. Often these are the foundations of academic disciplines.

---

[1] I would like to thank the anonymous referee at *Metaphilosophy* for suggesting these examples of text-types based on paradigm cases.

The text-type of an academic discipline, such as the text-type of philosophy, plays an essential role in the discipline. Such text-types are discipline-relative. The specification of an academic text-type represents discipline-relative criteria to appraise and create such texts. A seeming obstacle to individuating academic types is that there are often controversies within a discipline as to which texts are to be treated as canonical. However, to the extent that controversies are within a discipline, there will be some texts that are uncontroversially counted as canonical by the vast majority of scholars within that discipline. These texts would found the only ostensible, uncontroversial canon on which we could base our understanding of the discipline's type, and we can identify the type as what the vast majority of scholars take to be the common traits of these texts.

Another seeming obstacle to identifying types by reference to paradigm cases or canons of disciplines is that they often represent the accomplishments of some cultures to the exclusion of others. One might thus worry that the resulting types are culturally relative. The very knowledge of a type of text would thus seem to be not universal but accessible only to cultures that have access to such a canon. In response we may note that such cultural contingencies are no obstacle to our ability to *apply* text-types in translation, for text-types are not the object of translation. Rather, they provide the considerations that help one decide what, in a text, is to be preserved in translation. Thus, even though our understanding of a type of text may be based upon culturally specific canons or paradigms, the type can help us identify vast bodies of literature of the type's sort in foreign cultures. This is exactly how European scholars came to identify large and ancient traditions of philosophy in China and India.

In the case of India, scholars tend to agree that there is an ancient tradition of philosophy stretching back several centuries prior to the Common Era. There is less consensus on whether the Indian tradition clearly had a term that corresponds to what we understand as philosophy, and thus it is not clear whether the ancient South Asians clearly distinguished philosophy from other intellectual pursuits (Halbfass 1988, 263–64). Nevertheless, on the basis of an understanding of the text-type of philosophy gleaned from the Western canon of philosophy, scholars were able to understand this type as instantiated in Indian literature. While the ancient Chinese seemed to have a term (*zhe-chue*, or *zhe-xue*) that corresponds to the etymology of "philosophy" as *LOVE OF WISDOM*[2] (Billington 1997, 86), it seems that Western scholars were again able to identify a body of literature in this cultural tradition by deference to the type of text gleaned from the canon of Western philosophy. In both

---

[2] In this article I distinguish *expressing* a concept, as opposed to using a term or referring to a term, by italicized, small-capital letters.

cases, we are likely to read back into both of these cultures and their literature the *concept* of philosophy as it has evolved in the West because of the success of studying ancient Indian and Chinese texts as texts of philosophy. But this should not lead us to lose sight of how we came to understand such texts as texts of philosophy.

Text-types thus transcend the contingencies of culture and language in a specific sense: regardless of the cultural origin of our understanding of a type, its applicability is not restricted to texts from that culture. This contrasts dramatically with the case of literal, linguistic meaning (understood as the systematic or basic role of an expression in a language), which (for all the reasons considered in the previous section) is linguistically relative.

Text-types are indispensable in translation because texts, in and of themselves, are polysemous. Texts can be read in many ways because they have many aspects and features. One sentence with a certain literal meaning might be a joke, metaphor, or false description, or even a true description, and there is no way of assessing what contribution a sentence makes to what is to be translated without situating it within an actual text and reading the text as a text of a certain type.

In the case of philosophy it might not always be possible to literally translate an argument across languages. This is not to say that the literal meaning of the source language argument is irrelevant to assessing its translatable content. A translator of philosophy can succeed by assessing the literal meaning of an argument in light of its place within a text read as a text of philosophy and can thereby reconstruct an argument in the target language with premises that play the same logical role as the source language premises. The literal meaning of the original argument will thus remain relevant to determining what is to be translated, but the translation will not be literally equivalent.

As an example of the text-type of philosophy at work, consider the following section of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*, followed by G. E. M. Anscombe's translation (my underlining):

I.134 Betrachten wir den Satz: "Es verhält sich so und so"—wie kann ich sagen, dies sei die allgemeine Form des Satzes?—Es ist vor allem *selbst* ein Satz, ein deutscher Satz, denn es hat Subjekt und Prädikat. Wie aber wird dieser Satz angewendet—in unsrer alltäglichen Sprache nämlich? Denn nur *daher* habe ich ihn ja genommen.

I.134 Let us examine the proposition: "This is how things are."—How can I say that this is the general form of propositions?—It is first and foremost *itself* a proposition, an English sentence, for it has a subject and a predicate. But how is this sentence applied—that is, in our everyday language? For I got it from there and nowhere else.

(Wittgenstein 1958, 51–51e)

Anscombe's authoritative translation of Wittgenstein's text is characteristic of successful translations: it does not treat translation as a word-for-word, sentence-for-sentence exchange across languages. Rather, it employs a text-type. If Anscombe had decided to translate Wittgenstein's text as though it were a text on linguistics, concerned with empirical observations about various features of specific languages, then the adjustment she would have made in translation would have been very different. She likely would not translate the quoted sentence, and she would translate ''deutscher Satz'' as ''German sentence.'' This would come close to the ''literal'' translation of this phrase. She does something different. She translates the sentence in quotation marks, and translates ''deutscher Satz'' as ''English sentence,'' even though ''deustcher'' is German for ''German.'' Her decision here is underwritten by the application of the text-type of philosophy to the project of translating Wittgenstein. So understood, Anscombe took her task as concerned with preserving the philosophical content of Wittgenstein's text. The philosophical point of this passage revolves not around the peculiarities of German but rather around Wittgenstein's philosophical theses in the *Philosophical Investigations*, including the thesis that UNDERSTANDING is elucidated by competence in a linguistic practice (see Hacker 1996, 127–28). At other points in the text, this same philosophical thesis plays out through Wittgenstein's comments on the peculiarities of some linguistic practices, and here Anscombe chooses a strategy that *does* preserve the reference to the specific language identified in the source text (see *Philosophical Investigations* I, § 538).

In recognizing text-types, and drawing distinctions between types such as poetry, fiction, philosophy, and science, we do not have to be committed to the principle that the proper translation of a text read as a text of a certain type ignores and does not preserve contrary text-type theoretic modalities. Thus, to read and translate a text as a text of philosophy might involve recognizing the *functionally significant* contribution that the poetic or literary features of a text make to the overall philosophical significance of the text. However, one can only assess the philosophical function played by literary devices such as plot, narrative, and metaphor once we elect to read a text, or some portion of it, as philosophy. Thus, we do not have to compromise the governing role of one text-type in translation to recognize the role that contrary text-type theoretic modalities play in translation. We harmonize these various aspects by electing one type as the governing type in reading and translation, which allows us to understand the *functional significance* of contrary text-type theoretic modalities. As a general rule, *the only features of a text that a translator should endeavor to preserve in translation are those that have a functional significance relative to the governing type that the translator elects to apply in translation. A successful translation* will employ a governing type that is not only elected by the translator but also

exemplified by the text. Such a type *supports* translation. As a text can be characterized by multiple text-type theoretic modalities, a given text could be translated according to many governing types.

So, Quine is wrong. Translation does not proceed sentence by sentence: poor translation might adopt this approach, but not successful translation. Translation is concerned with constructing texts that are equivalent to their originals, and this equivalence is justified by text-type theoretic considerations.

These considerations allow us to recognize that Quine is incorrect on an additional matter. Quine concludes from the troubles of translating on a word-for-word, sentence-for-sentence basis that translation is *indeterminate*. According to a natural interpretation, the thesis that translation is indeterminate is the claim that the best translational practices cannot secure a *uniquely correct* translation. But Quine cautions that his thesis is not to be confused with "the platitude that uniqueness of translation is absurd." Rather, it is the more "radical" thesis that there can be competing empirically justified approaches to translation (what he calls "translation manuals") that rule each other's translation out of order and perhaps even that the resulting translations will be divergent in truth-value (Quine 1960, 73–74). Such a controversy would not be decidable on the basis of all possible empirical evidence (Quine 1969b). In lay terms, Quine's thesis is that there can be controversies about the propriety of *competing* translations that cannot be decided on the basis of our best translational practices. Call this the *Quinean conception of the indeterminacy of translation*. The case for Quinean indeterminacy is based on a linguistic account of translation that attempts to match words and sentences across languages on the basis of literal synonymy. If this basic view of translation is incorrect, the foundations of Quine's case for the indeterminacy of translation are faulty. More important, it is unclear how such a thesis about the indeterminacy of translation could be resurrected on the model of text-types. If text-types are the ultimate arbitrators of success in translation, then any time a single text-type *supports* two translations of the same text, *ex hypothesi*, we have a case of differing but compatible translation *judged relative to text-type considerations*. Such compatible translations would thereby be virtual *intralingual* translations of each other. Such translations would not be indeterminate in a Quinean sense, for Quinean indeterminacy excludes the cases of differing but compatible translations. The two compatible translations might differ radically between each other with respect to the literal meaning of the expressions that constitute them, but to take this difference—independently of text-type considerations—as a sign of translational failure or Quinean indeterminacy is to relapse into a linguistic approach to translation.

Nothing that I have argued establishes that translation, even on a text-type theoretic basis, is always determinate in the natural sense, of

providing a uniquely correct translation. But it would be surprising if it did. The very aim of a text-type account of translation is to show that differences in the literal meaning of words and sentences (across languages) are no obstacle to producing accurate translation. If a text in a source language and one in a distinct target language with differing literal meanings can yet be equivalent, then there is no reason on the basis of the considerations adduced so far that this cannot be the case for *intralingual* translations of the same text. Rather, the considerations presented so far suggest that there can be many literally distinct but equivalent translations of the same text that are, *ex hypothesi*, equivalent to each other, judged relative to a text-type.

One might worry that, since on the theory that I have defended so far one text can be translated according to several types, the resulting translations according to distinct types will be incompatible translations. However, if the theory I have defended is correct—that the success of translation is to be judged relative to one governing type that the translator elects—then translations produced according to contrary governing types do not compete, for they aim at different text-type theoretic standards of success. If there were a third criterion of translational success that all translations regardless of type aspired to, there might be some sense in which contrary text-type translations could compete; but if we had such a criterion, then all translations that are consistent with it will be by definition compatible, and we would not be able to resurrect Quinean indeterminacy. Quine's argument for indeterminacy thus appears to be a function of his argument's vacillation between two criteria of translational success (an intuitive conception of equivalence on logical grounds, and the empirical adequacy of his so-called translation manuals). A text-type theoretic approach, in contrast, subordinates questions of intuitive or logical equivalence to text-type considerations.

The resulting theory of text-types and their role in translation thus yields a picture of translation that affirms the possibility of multiple correct translations relative to a given type, and the possibility that multiple types can be fruitfully brought to bear in translating a single text. But for all of this liberality, there is an advantage. There is one type of Archimedean invariance that we will be able to focus on for the purposes of conceptual analysis—namely, the text-type.

Text-Type Semantics

I have argued for two theses: (1) translation preserves meaning, and (2) translation is determinate in the Quinian sense when it conforms to text-types. To recognize that translation is determinate in the Quinian sense is not to insist that translation must yield uniquely correct translations, but to insist that principles that govern translation do not admit of unsolvable

controversies. (I henceforth intend this sense when I speak of determinacy.) The conjunction of these two theses shows us the error of the linguistic account of translation, and the correlative semantic thesis that meaning is a determinate property of expressions of a language. What the two theses show is that preserving meaning in translation occurs relative to texts of definite types. In other words, semantic equivalence across translations is not reducible to a linguistic equivalence in the abstract, but is an equivalence of aspects of texts according to a text-type. If translation aims at meaning preservation, and if translation is only determinate when guided by text-types, it follows that any translation that does not take into account text-types is indeterminate, and the type of meaning it yields is indeterminate.

Determinate translations on this account yield what I will call *determinate meanings* of three sorts. (1) Whole texts are determinate meanings, or if one prefers, determinately meaningful, when they are translatable according to a text-type. A target text that is a genuine translation of a source text has the same meaning. (2) Text-type features that must be preserved in a determinate translation are determinately meaningful. For instance, if certain concepts are essential to articulating texts of a certain type, and the text-type demands that they be preserved in translation, their canonical specifications constitute determinate meanings. (3) Translation units that are preserved in translation according to a text-type (such as the section of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* quoted above) are determinately meaningful and semantically equivalent to each other—though their constituents considered in the abstract may not be. I call this account of determinate meaning "text-type-semantics."

The recognition that translation cannot proceed by matching words and sentences across languages on the basis of linguistic synonymy leads to a text-type theoretic account of successful translation, which in turn leads to a text-type theoretic account of meaning. But one might wonder why it is that text-types are immune to the types of worries that beset a linguistic account of translation. The reason is that while on the linguistic account of translation languages are the objects of translation, on a text-type theoretic approach text-types are not what we translate. Rather, they are the considerations we defer to when *choosing* what to translate in a text. On a text-type theoretic account, there is no clear sense in which text-types are matched across languages and cultures in the way that words or sentences are putatively matched on a linguistic account of translation. The only sense that we can give to the idea that text-types must match across cultures to yield translation is the idea that a culture must produce texts that lend themselves to being read and translated according to a type for such translations to be successful. A text-type theoretic approach to translation, thus, unlike a linguistic approach, does not have to assume any basic similarity or commensurability between cultures, nor must it

posit that cultures independently of each other recognize the same type of text in order to facilitate translation. To the contrary, a text-type theoretic approach to translation is consistent with radical cultural difference, for it assumes neither any linguistic commensurability nor any cultural similarities with respect to conceptualizations of text-types. In theory, this account can recognize the case of the translation of a source text t from a culture A according to type x, into culture B, where A and B show no appreciation for type x, so long as those expert about type x and cultures A and B recognize this as a correct translation according to the type. Members of culture B may not understand the translation, but if meaning is objective, we should not expect the easy or ready uptake of the target audience to be a necessary condition of translational success. Of course, as noted, in any case where we are able to translate large amounts of texts according to a type, such as the case of the type *philosophy* and vast numbers of texts from India and China, it becomes difficult not to read the very concept of the type back into the cultures that we are translating from. In such cases it seems that we can have no better evidence that these cultures had the concept of the type as we understand it, though it might be difficult to establish this independently of our historical appreciation of the type in question from a third cultural origin.

Recognizing that text-types help us define meanings that cross cultures and languages in translation, and that a given text can be translated according to multiple types, opens the prospect that a given text can have multiple meanings. To clarify this implication, it is useful to distinguish between a text and a work. We can define a composite inscription as a text, whether this is orthographic or memorized. In contrast, we can understand a work as a semantic ideal defined by the translational genealogy of texts relative to a type and authorship. If text-type semantics is correct, a work and a text are not exactly the same, and hence a given text might instantiate more than one work, while several texts might express the same work. The latter case is so familiar that it is hardly ever noticed. What we call a work (say, Hobbes's *Leviathan*) is actually expressed by many texts that can be inscriptionally quite different. Such differences are keenly studied by philologists, and ignored by all but the most textually attuned scholars. The reason nonphilologists get by without paying much notice to minute differences between editions of the same work is that we identify a text as a work on semantic grounds via a type, and not simply on inscriptional grounds. Our tolerance for textual divergence of different tokens of the same work can be quite wide. For instance, very different translations of Plato's *Republic* are treated as instantiating the same work. The limit to identifying texts with a work is text-type theoretic. If when reading the *Republic* as a work of philosophy (as we usually do) we come to the conclusion that two different translations actually make very different philosophical claims, then we have reason to think that what we have is no longer the same work.

The other side of the distinction between a text and a work is that we will have to recognize the theoretical possibility that a given text might express multiple works. We are rarely in a position to have to countenance this, for we cannot successfully read and translate every text according to multiple types in accordance with its meaning.

As the aim of translation is the preservation of meaning, success in reading and translating a text according to a type is not primarily a question for pragmatics, where success is judged by profitability. A primarily pragmatic approach to textual derivation would constitute an *adaptation*. But a translation, in contrast, aims at *preserving meaning*, which is a semantic endeavor. Translation thus assumes that there is a reality to the meaning of a source text to be preserved in translation. According to text-type semantics, a text-type is what helps us identify this meaning in a source text, and assess the success of a target text as a translation of the source text. Successful translation and meaning preservation thus results from a successful application of a type to a text that exemplifies the type.

How could we ever discern if a type x is successfully selected for a source text in translation? By commissioning several translations of the source text by several expert translators of type x who employ type x in their translation of the source text. If the translators agree that the resulting translations are equivalent relative to the expectations of type x, then we have reason to believe that the type in question is supported by the source text and characterizes its meaning, and that the type supports its translation. If the translators agree that the resulting translations are not all of them equivalent relative to type x, or if none of them is equivalent to another relative to type x, then we have less reason to believe that the type in question is clearly supported by the text. If the translators agree that a majority of the translations agree with each other relative to type x, then we would have reason to believe that they are accurate translations, and the minority translations are not. If the translators agree that none of the resulting translations can be read as translations of each other relative to type x, or if there is no consensus on which of the translations are equivalent relative to type x, we have reason to believe that type x is not supported by the source text, and that any effort to apply type x to the source text would result in an inaccurate and unsuccessful translation.

What if one text can be successfully translated according to type y and type z? Would this refute the determinate status of the meaning preserved in translation? If we maintain a Quinian account of determinacy as what can be adjudicated by our best standards of translation, then we would have to conclude that the source text does determinately display both text-type theoretic meanings, and, moreover, we would be correct in regarding the source text as expressing a work definable by type y, and a different work definable by type z.

In registering a distinction between texts and works, and while recognizing that a text's status as a work consists in a relation of translation, it is noteworthy that there can be discontinuous relations of translation that do not allow for the transitive preservation of meaning across subsequent generations of translations necessary to preserve an identity as a work. For instance, a source text and a target text (call it TT1) might both exemplify the same work, relative to a type x, but TT1 might be translated via type y into TT2. As TT2 was not produced via the same type that produced TT1, there is no reason to believe that TT2 shares the textual meaning that renders both the source text and TT1 the same work. While the semantic relationship between TT2 and TT1 is perfectly determinate and decidable by the principles of translation, TT2 does not have any necessary, semantic connection with the source text. For this reason, we could not call TT2 the work of the author of the source text. Rather, we might consider it the creation of the translator. However, according to TTS, if TT2 was produced according to the same type that was employed in the production of TT1, we would have reason to believe that TT2 expresses the same work as the source text. In the absence of errors in translation, subsequent-generation translations are semantically equivalent to the original source text so long as the governing type is preserved in translation.

Does it follow from the distinction between a work and a text that there are determinate translations of works by reference to text-types, and that there are not determinate translations of texts via text-types? The conception of determinacy that my argument calls upon is Quinian. As noted, to recognize that translation is determinate in the Quinian sense is to insist not that translation must yield uniquely correct translations, but that the principles that govern translation do not admit of unsolvable controversies of translation. This is what I have been identifying as the determinacy of translation. A determinate translation is thus a translation whose status as a translation is decidable according to the principles of translation—which I have been arguing are text-type theoretic. It is the translation of texts, thus, and not works, to which the notion of determinacy primarily accrues as it is the text whose status as a translation is the subject of controversy resolution via text-type considerations. Hence, we can even determinately translate a text via a type it does not support. The resulting translation, though determinate, is unsuccessful. To call a text a "work" is a dignity bestowed upon it once we determine translation to be successful or unsuccessful. If it is successful, the source text and the target text express the same work. If translation is not successful, we might be inclined to call the target text a different work from the source text, and treat it as its own source text correctly translated into target texts, but it could not be treated as sharing a meaning with the original source text.

If text-type semantics is correct, the traditional project of analytic philosophy (the analysis of concepts expressed by words in a language) is

of indeterminate significance. If translation were an exchange of synonymous words or sentences across languages, a correct account of concepts expressed through words of a language would in and of itself specify the conditions for the translatability of such expressions. In so specifying conceptual meanings to be preserved in a successful translation, the traditional approach to conceptual analysis in the analytic tradition would be uncovering a type of meaning that transcends culture and language as attested by the principles of *translation*. It would have claim to being semantically determinate. However, as translation is not a word-for-word, sentence-for-sentence exchange across languages based on cross-linguistic synonymy but a project of constructing textual equivalents in the light of specific text-types, the traditional approach to conceptual analysis leads us to nothing semantically determinate that can be adjudicated by the principles of translation. In answer to Frege's *context principle* that asserts that a word only has a definite meaning within a sentence (Frege 1980, x), text-type semantics puts forward the following principle: it is only within a text of a definite type that an expression has a determinate meaning. It is only within a text of a definite type that we can assess how linguistic expressions are to be translated, and thus it is only here that we can provide an objective, language-transcendent conceptualization of its meaning.

Another way to articulate this is to say that any account of the meaning of an expression of a language that we care to give does not exhaust the possible contributions such expressions make to a text or how such meaning can be preserved in translation. In the abstract, linguistic meaning is indeterminate. Indeterminate meaning is not a lack of meaning. Expressions of a language are wholly meaningful, and they can be studied and described by social-scientific means. Linguists, anthropologists, philologists, and lexicographers have much work to do in charting a language's grammar and the peculiar, historically and culturally contingent meanings of expressions in a language. The translator must be competent and knowledgeable in such matters, for the meaning of a text is a function of the semiotic resources that make up a text in addition to the text-type. But any account we care to give about a language fails to show how meaning can transcend the narrow confines of language and culture, for the only way that meaning can transcend such confines is in a text of a definite type, for only here is it determinately translatable.

As an example, take a normative term like "good." Philosophers since Moore have tried to provide us with analyses of its meaning, and the options have abounded (see Moore 1903; Ayer 1946, 112; Boyd 1988; Thomson 1997). Often such analyses have some linguistic support, but no one can guarantee how the term "good" will be best treated when translating a text of a certain type. In a poem, "good" might evoke imagery by its association in the Western context with Plato, and a translator of a poem might properly translate it with a construction that

has no obvious association with Plato or axiology because it serves a similar metaphorical function in the target language—a decision underwritten by the text-type of poetry. Or, it might occur as a modifier in a construction that identifies a natural object, and a translator of science may correctly produce a corresponding translation of the unit in question that does not make use of any obviously normative concept at all in its place, but that picks out the object referred to by some other means. In a translation of a psychology text that involves an interview with subjects, words such as ''good'' may be translated in terms that more clearly express preferences of subjects without any claim to objectivity owing to the concerns of the text-type of the social sciences.

One might respond to this defense of text-type semantics by rejecting the foundational role of text-types in translation. One might argue that some traditional option in the literature will provide us a means of accounting for the phenomenon of text-types, without having to countenance them as anything other than a function of some basic semantic feature of a language. I doubt this avenue of inquiry can yield positive results. What we require is some way to mediate languages in translation. The traditional approach in the analytic tradition to meaning and translation has failed to provide a viable option. The prominent tendency in the tradition is to look to metaphysical intermediaries to account for meaning: states of affairs, referents, abstract objects, mental states, and the like. The trouble is that these intermediaries are typically brought in as the meaning of words and sentences, but if this is their role, they stop being intermediaries and start being semantic properties of words and sentences of a language. They become *virtually* relativized, and translation is then thought to hang on the mercy of words and sentences across languages having similar semantic properties. In opposition to this metaphysical approach to meaning, some philosophers have looked to contexts of language use, not metaphysics, to elucidate meaning: a tradition stretching back to philosophers such as the later Wittgenstein and J. L. Austin. Such contextually oriented philosophers of language have not worried about translation, and it is rather unclear how their paradigm could.[3] Translation aims at ensuring that texts separated by linguistic and geographical barriers have the same meaning. Translation is thus in some important sense about showing how meaning transcends contexts.

Text-types, in contrast, are the perfect intermediaries, for they concern texts, not expressions, or sentences of a language considered in

---

[3] Austin comes close to talking about the translation of terms (Austin 1979a, 39–40; 1979b) but is far from discussing translation theory at these junctions. Wittgenstein's early commitment to a linguistic account of translation (Wittgenstein 1960, 95) gives way to the view that translation's goal is the explanation of linguistic behavior (*Philosophical Investigations* I, § 243). This might be plausible if translation is a type of explanation. But it is not.

themselves. Texts are portable, so they can physically traverse contexts, but they are also translatable and can thus traverse linguistic and cultural contexts, unlike languages that represent the boundaries of cultures.

According to text-type semantics, translation is a process of textual construction. The only constant in successful translation is the text-type, for the text-type sets the conditions of how to read and assess the content of a source text for preservation in a translation, and the text-type specifies the structure and shape of the target text. Text-types form the basis of epistemic institutions commonly called disciplines. These (often cross-cultural) social practices form the backdrop against which controversies of translation relative to their particular concerns can be resolved if they arise. Traditional worries about translation evaporate on the textual account. For instance, if successful translation requires that a target community understands an unfamiliar concept, texts can be translated with many devices (glossaries and footnotes, for instance; see Appiah 2004) to alert readers to conceptual innovations. Whether such innovations make their way into the target language matters little, for such framing devices can regiment the meaning of expressions within the text. Text-type translation has the support of textual experts who can train people to read texts of the relevant sort. The objectivity of successful translation does not have to hinge on the easy uptake of a translation by a target community; it involves the readability of such texts according to learnable textual standards.

Relativism

Thomas Kuhn argued that scientific concepts are not common across scientific paradigms that constrain their meaning. If translation is a matching of synonymous words and sentences across languages and if paradigms are languages of scientific cultures, it follows that they are indeterminately translatable (Kuhn 1970, 149, 202 n. 17) or are not translatable (Kuhn 1983, 670). Based on this insight, Kuhn argued that scientific paradigms and their theories are incommensurable and that there is no common, external standard among them (Kuhn 1970, 11, 108–10). If text-type semantics is correct, Kuhn's linguistic conception of translation is spurious. Others have argued that ethical concepts form judgments whose truth is explained by contextual factors, such as social agreements or local motivational or theoretical commitments (Harman and Thomson 1996, 3–6; Dreier 1990). If text-type semantics is correct, there is nothing semantically determinate about such analyses, for they are not informed by the role of texts in semantics.

Stephen Hales, in *Relativism and the Foundations of Philosophy*, presents a simple epistemic argument for relativism that is orthogonal to semantic arguments for relativism (Hales 2006, 2). He begins his argument by noting that philosophers are not the only ones who are

interested in philosophical propositions. According to Hales, Christians, shamans, and rationalist philosophers all stake their claim to differing philosophical propositions. The challenge is thus to find some way to decide between the various claims of the Christian, the shaman, and the philosopher, for it seems that they prima facie come into conflict on many fronts. On Hales's account, none is forthcoming: "There is no metaperspective, or absolute cross-platform epistemic standard, to which we might appeal in order to determine whether Christians are right that there are nonphysical immortal souls, or whether the majority of rationalist philosophers are right and there are no such things. Each belief seems justified and supported by the basic belief-acquiring methods and subsequent ratiocinating intrinsic to their respective perspective" (Hales 2006, 123). According to Hales, the best interpretation of this finding is not epistemic skepticism, or a semantic nihilism that rejects the existence of philosophical propositions, but a relativism that regards philosophical propositions as abstract intensional objects each of which is true from some perspective (Hales 2006, 113).

Much of Hales's argument (and the argument of those interested in a narrower form of philosophical relativism—moral relativism) is informed by the seemingly cultural relativity of the philosophical claims people make, and the apparent lack of an Archimedean point to adjudicate among such claims (see Hales 2006, 69, 112, 179–84; see Wong 1984). The argument is thus reliant upon the availability of successful translations of the philosophical claims of thinkers from diverse cultural and linguistic traditions. But if text-type semantics is correct, claims of philosophy, science, and literature are determinately translatable and significant by virtue of their corresponding text-type.

If text-type semantics is correct, the so-called demarcation problem of distinguishing among science, philosophy, and literature is not one that can be solved by scrutinizing the claims of science, philosophy, or literature. Rather, it is a matter of identifying the text-types that allow us to translate scientific, philosophical, and literary texts. Linguistically, there may be no difference among candidate texts of science, philosophy, or literature (such as the early cosmological literatures of many societies), but translationally there are important differences in how such texts are to be translated and the translated content, depending on the text-type that is employed. If semantic determinacy is guaranteed by determinate translation, and if determinate translation is only possible with text-types, we can only determinately assess the content of a text relative to a text-type.

Thus, if text-type semantics is correct, there is no way to translate philosophical claims accurately across languages without relying on the text-type of philosophy. If philosophical propositions are determinately meaningful and translatable, then it is by virtue of the text-type of philosophy that they have their unique philosophical significance. The

common semantic underpinning of philosophy undermines relativism, for it constitutes an Archimedean point for philosophy.

Text-types can help us adjudicate among competing textual artifacts in a discipline for three reasons. First, if text-type semantics is correct, claims within a text-type theoretic domain of inquiry have the determinate, translatable content that they do only by virtue of the presiding text-type; thus all claims within such a domain are semantically related to the presiding text-type. Second, text-types act as institutional standards in their respective disciplines. A major component of advanced training in any text-type theoretic discipline, whether it is philosophy, science, or literature, involves learning how properly to write and read texts of the discipline's sort, and only the text-type could act as a token independent standard to assess a student's progress. It is possible to set out to write an essay in philosophy or a laboratory report in chemistry, and fail. It is a virtual tautology to note that this failure is text-type theoretic. Third, text-types give rise to what I identify as "text-type features"—formal features of a type of text that instantiate the text-type and thus must be preserved in the relevant text-type theoretic translation. In some cases, these features are concepts of a type of text. When we combine these with the normative function of the text-type, powerful results are possible.

Philosophical Concepts and the Text-Type of Philosophy

Philosophical knowledge arises out of philosophical concepts, understood not as concepts of a language but rather as text-type *features* of philosophy. Often, philosophers try to determine what philosophical concepts can be objectively true of, and then understand translation as a matching up of linguistic resources with this same meaning. This approach does not accord with the strategies of successful translation. For the results to be objective in a manner that transcends culture and language the adjudication of philosophical claims must be based on an account that successfully explains translating philosophical texts, for only such an account can show how the claims of philosophy are language- and culture-transcendent. On such a translational approach, such claims transcend culture and language because they are *accessible* to persons in any culture via textual translation, without assuming any basic cultural similarities or commensurabilities. Such an account will not show that the objectivity and culture- and language-transcendent nature of philosophical truth is internal to every cultural outlook. But as we do not assume that the language- and culture-transcendence of scientific truth depends upon all cultures having an internal appreciation for scientific truths, we should not expect this to be the case in philosophy. Cultural change might result with the influx of novel philosophical ideas made possible by translation, but the account that I have been pressing does not assume

this change, or any cultural similarities, as a condition of the Archimedean function of the text-type.

Philosophical concepts, as text-type features of philosophy, are important for the translator for two reasons. First, in a successful translation of a text *as* a text of philosophy, philosophical concepts are necessarily preserved because their meaning instantiates the structure of the philosophical text. Second, to recognize a term as instantiating a philosophical concept as a text-type feature of the philosophical text-type is to treat the conceptual content of this term as a point of reference in disambiguating a whole text, and in constructing a semantically equivalent text. The conceptual content of a philosophical concept so conceived is not atomic, nor is it holistic in any traditional sense. Rather, it is textual. The plausibility of the account depends on whether it tracks features that a translator of philosophy must be aware of to disambiguate and translate a text as a text of philosophy.

To appreciate what philosophical concepts are like, we first need a general account of the text-type of philosophy. My suggestion is that, roughly, *the philosophical text is concerned with the application, investigation, criticism, and debate of universal and general theories on a variety of different topics, forwarded in the light of (objectively persuasive) relevant considerations.*

Some caveats and clarifications are in order. First, if the account of how to identify text-types that I suggested earlier is correct, a defensible account of the text-type of philosophy is supported by what is common to all of the works of philosophy whose canonical status is not controversial. If what I have said about identifying the text-type of a discipline is correct, conclusively making a case for a text-type of a discipline will require a type of sociology of a discipline that is yet to be undertaken. This points to a virtue of the account, I believe: it allows that conceptual analysis can be founded on empirical information, and the information in the case of text-type disciplines pertains to avenues of inquiry that often traverse cultures and the world. The apparent downside to this approach is that until such a study is carried out, we are in the realm of speculation. However, I think that much can be said to defend the account I am assuming.

One reason to feel optimistic that such a simple account of the text-type of philosophy could be correct is that the actual number of texts uncontroversially counted as canonical by the vast majority of scholars within a discipline is small. While we can easily identify and translate texts of a non-Western provenance as philosophy, none has gained any widespread recognition as canonical within the discipline of philosophy. Add to this the controversy that exists between so-called Analytic and Continental philosophers about the canon of philosophy, and one is left with a very small list of authors and texts from ancient to modern times that could claim to be canonical according to the most uncontroversial

standards. Such a pool of texts would include such works as the *Republic*, the *Critique of Pure Reason*, and some others for sure; but specifying them would require empirical work yet to be done.

One might object that while the proposal I am nominating might be sufficient to characterize a philosophical text, it is not necessary. If my suggestion that we must define text-types by central, uncontroversial examples is correct, then it can come to pass that there are tokens of philosophy that do not fit well with the type as defined by the central cases. Far from being troublesome, this is I think what must be the case if textual criticism on text-type theoretic grounds is possible. But one might worry that this will render impossible the translation of textual examples that are far from the central type. In response I propose that so long as the translator can distinguish between the ideal as set out by a type and what an author idiosyncratically takes to be consistent with the type as evident in his work, the translator can produce a translation of the work according to the type. She can accomplish this by treating the idiosyncrasies of the author's conception of the type as part of the substantive content to be translated—if it is apparent in the text. The proposal of the text-type of philosophy that I am nominating is broad and abstract enough to allow for this type of accommodation.

Another objection to the proposed account of the text-type of philosophy is that it is too broad and barely distinguishable from scholarship at large. One might take this to be an obstacle to its ability to translate what is unique about philosophy. However, there is an important distinction between types and tokens of texts that permits that one token might instantiate many types. The broad applicability of the text-type of philosophy to tokens of texts that we count as scholarly is no more an obstacle to the correct translation of philosophy than the possibility that we can translate all tokens of philosophy as avant-garde poetry according to such a text-type. If it turns out that the text-type of philosophy based upon the uncontroversial core of the canon of philosophy is employable to translate texts from any scholarly discipline, then the proper conclusion to draw here is that there is something philosophical about all scholarship. (If this is true, then the common practice of awarding a Ph.D.—doctor of philosophy—degree for advanced research in all scholarly disciplines will have the text-type of philosophy in support.)

If the proposed account of the text-type of philosophy is correct, philosophy is concerned with theories and reasons. But it is by the abstraction of philosophical theories that philosophy has its broad applicability. Moreover, the reasons that we consider in philosophy in favor of possible theories or in criticism of them are not presented as mere likes and dislikes. Rather, the relevant considerations are presented as objectively persuasive. Thus, even a subjectivist or relativist who makes the case for subjectivism or relativism presents reasons and considerations

in favor of these theses that aim at being objectively persuasive. Understanding such aspirations of philosophy is essential to translating philosophy. If the translator did not understand the objective aspirations of philosophy, she could mistakenly translate a philosophical text as though it were a type of psychological inventory of likes, dislikes, and thoughts. This would fail as a translation of philosophy in the way that a student's personal diary fails as an essay in philosophy. In other words, the notion of relevance at work in philosophy is not one that is subjectively determined, it is one that is objective.

If philosophical concepts are incarnations of the text-type of philosophy, philosophical concepts have a *quasi-indexical* character that retains some but not full context sensitivity. Philosophical concepts would, so understood, have room for agents of texts (whether they are authors or characters within a dialogue) to forward theories and reasons of their choosing. But the reasons, like those that characterize the text-type of philosophy, must be those that aspire to objectivity. Thus, philosophical concepts as devices of translation contain what I call the *objectivity clause* that specifies that agents of a text articulate theories in the light of (objectively persuasive) *relevant considerations*. There are two ways to read this clause. The *narrow* reading directs the translator of a philosophical text to look for considerations in the text that constitute what the textual agent regards as objectively persuasive. But a *wide* reading assesses whether the considerations objectively underwrite the agent's philosophical claims independently of the agent's commitments. If there were only the narrow reading, there would be no objective considerations in philosophy. If there were only the wide reading, translators would never be able to preserve the dialectic of a source text.

Do we require some objective criterion to balance these two readings of the objectivity clause? Let us consider this question first from the perspective of the translator. For the translator to translate accurately a philosophical text, he does not need to know what satisfies the wide reading. He merely needs to be able to understand what the author or agent of the text he is translating believes satisfies the wide reading of the objectivity clause; this is what the narrow reading of the objectivity clause consists in. In this case we do not require a criterion that balances these two readings, other than the recognition that we cannot make sense of the narrow reading of the objectivity clause (what a given philosopher takes to be objectively correct in philosophy) independently of the possibility of the wide reading of the objectivity clause (the conceptual possibility that there is something that counts as objectively correct in philosophy). Put simply, a translator of philosophy does not need to have settled all debates in philosophy. He merely needs to be a good student of such debates.

Considered from the perspective of the philosopher concerned with substantive questions in philosophy, the question of whether there is a

criterion that can balance these two ways of reading the objectivity clause is the question of whether there is some way to distinguish between what *is* objectively true in philosophy and what philosophers take to be true. While I do not believe that there is a criterion that will fulfill this desideratum, there is a methodology that I hope to unfold in the next section, based on the quasi-indexical account of philosophical concepts that is being specified in the present section. In short, my strategy will be to argue that given the preceding text-type theoretic understanding of philosophy, facts about the narrow reading of the objectivity clause as it is played out in the literature give rise to an evidentially constrained account of philosophical concepts as devices that mediate philosophical debate. These in turn can be used to criticize and adjudicate between competing views in philosophy. Thus, once again, the strategy will be to articulate a theory of conceptual analysis based on empirical evidence. In this case, the evidence is what philosophers have argued throughout history and across cultures.

This account differs from a host of accounts of philosophically interesting terms in the literature that also explain their meaning as their indexical function. Usually, such accounts regard the meaning of a term like ''good'' as consisting in a rule by which an author articulates a theory or motivational set that is hers either individually or by virtue of its context.

On such an account, when I say ''torture is good'' I can speak truthfully if it so happens that the motivational set I am deferring to in my use of ''good'' identifies torture as one among its items or if the relevant theory of the context of utterance (say, the mores of one's society or one's interlocutors) regards torture as one among its items. James Dreier calls this type of account of the semantics of ''good'' *speaker relativism* (Dreier 1990). Similar accounts have been proffered for moral concepts (Phillips 1997; 1998) and epistemic concepts (Cohen 1986; 1987; 1988; 1998; 2005; DeRose 1995; 2004; 2005a; 2005b; Lewis 1996). The text-type theoretic account in contrast, in recognizing the role of the objectivity clause, is not a species of speaker relativism. On the text-type theoretic account, for a claim like ''torture is good'' to be true not only must it correctly identify torture as contained within the theory that an agent articulates with the concept good, the theory and the item identified must be based on relevant considerations that are objectively persuasive. Subjective commitments or local mores are not sufficient: they can be criticized for not being perspective-transcendent, and the supporting considerations brought to bear may be poor. The textual account correlatively differs in another way. It does not claim to explain the meaning of philosophical terms in English or any other language. Terms that function as crucial features of the philosophical text might have diverse semantics if we assess the question linguistically, and yet they may be translational equivalents because they fulfill the same textual function.

The structure of the philosophical text-type constitutes philosophical concepts, but these concepts also have their own distinctive personality generated by their role in philosophical texts. To fill in the details of their distinctive personality, we must examine how they structure texts of philosophy. This reveals distinctions that underwrite many practices in philosophy, such as the organization of course offerings and textbooks.

For instance, philosophical theories, articulated with philosophical concepts, such as *ETHICAL*, *BEAUTY*, *REAL*, and *KNOWLEDGE*, come in different varieties. It is often thought that there is a corresponding distinction between ethical, aesthetic, metaphysical, and epistemic theories, and hence, textbooks, course offerings, and institutional expertise are often delineated according to such theoretical distinctions. I call the factor that distinguishes such theories the *axiological differentia*. Philosophical theories also come in two varieties. Some have a theory-to-world direction of fit (which is to say that the adequacy of the theory is judged in the light of its ability to conform to the contingencies of the world). Metaphysical theories are like this. Other philosophical theories have a world-to-theory direction of fit, which is to say that the theory is presented as a standard against which the world is judged. Normative or evaluative theories, such as the theories of ethics and aesthetics, are like this.[4]

There are other important differences. Some philosophical concepts have a negative valence. *EVIL* and *UNREAL* are like this. An ethical theory that is presented as the standard against which the world is to be judged specifies standards toward which the world is thought to properly aspire. *Evil* items are outside this fold. Similarly, metaphysical theories of reality present a picture that excludes the *unreal*.

Some philosophical concepts are thin, while others are thick. Much has been written about the thick-thin distinction—evidenced in the distinction between concepts like *GOOD* and *COURAGEOUS*—but this debate has typically been conducted without any concern for text-types (see Williams 1985). A text-type theoretic account can accommodate the thickness of thick concepts via a criterial constraint on theory articulation absent in thin concepts. A thin concept, such as *EVIL*, for instance, can articulate any moral theory with a world-to-theory direction of fit, and it has apparently no constraint on theory articulation or reference aside from the valence that constrains it to identify items that fall outside the theory it articulates. *CRUEL*, in contrast, appears to add to this conceptual content a constraint on theory articulation, such that whatever is identified as falling under the concept of *CRUELTY* must also be harmful,

---

[4] David Phillips calls on the idea of direction of fit to the world to explain the normativity of value judgments such as "*x* is good" (Phillips 1998, 142), where "world" is understood to designate not the totality of all that is real but rather the contingent, empirical world. The notion of direction of fit has a longer history (see Anscombe 1963; Humberstone 1992; Smith 1994, 111–19; Velleman 1996).

injurious, or pain causing. Such constraint renders CRUELTY thicker than EVIL.

Philosophical concepts also seem to be overwhelmingly articulated with very ordinary terms in philosophical texts: this is a trend one can find in philosophical traditions throughout the world: "real," "knowledge," "right," "wrong," "meaning," "li," "tao," "pramana," "dharma," "tatva" are examples of terms that take on a special function in philosophical texts, and they are ordinary. Indeed, philosophical terms of the sort I am drawing attention to may at times be created from scratch, but this is unusual. Philosophy as a type of text arises naturally out of ordinary life, and the terminological instantiations of this type of text betray their humble origins.

Philosophical texts, in deference to the grammar of human languages, have developed a nonverb form and a verb form for philosophical concepts that matter little to how they function in philosophical texts.[5] The nonverb form of the concepts is often nominal or adjectival in grammar. Here is the nonverbal form of a typical thin concept, such as REAL or ETHICAL:

> Ordinary symbol *s* refers to an item *x* that falls (*within/outside*) universal and general theory *t* that has a (*theory-to-world/world-to-theory*) direction of fit, which is selected for (*fill in axiological differentia*), in accordance with the relevant considerations.

The following is the general scheme for thin, verb-form concepts, such as *ought to*:

> Ordinary symbol *s* indicates that an argument *a* (*satisfies/fails to satisfy*) conditions specified by a universal and general theory *t* that has a (*theory-to-world/world-to-theory*) direction of fit, which is selected for (*fill in axiological differentia*), in accordance with the relevant considerations.

If we add thickness to the nonverb scheme above, we arrive at:

> Ordinary symbol *s* refers to an item *x* that (*fill in extratheoretic constraint*), which falls (*within/outside*) a universal and general theory *t* that has a (*theory-to-world/world-to-theory*) direction of fit, which is selected for its (*fill in axiological differentia*), in accordance with the relevant considerations.

And next, the verbal form of thick concepts:

> Ordinary symbol *s* indicates that an argument *a* that (*fill in extratheoretic constraint*) and (*satisfies/fails to satisfy*) conditions specified by a universal and general theory *t* that has a (*theory-to-world/world-to-theory*) direction of fit, which is selected for (*fill in axiological differentia*), in accordance with the relevant considerations.

---

[5] Phillips brings attention to the fact that "ought" is a verb (Phillips 1998).

These are general schemes of philosophical concepts. What they require to be true philosophical concepts is that the italicized variables in parentheses are saturated.

Call such an account of philosophical concepts a *text-type theoretic account of philosophical concepts*, or TTPC. To translate accurately a philosophical text with philosophical terms expressing these concepts is not *simply* to produce a translation that is a word-for-word exchange based on synonymy. Rather, it is to produce a translation with a philosophical structure and content, informed by the philosophical concepts employed in a text. Philosophical concepts thus provide a point of reference to disambiguate a text as a text of philosophy. They direct us to read a text with an eye to discerning theoretical commitments of the relevant TTPC sort, given the particulars of the concepts employed, and to look for relevant considerations. We might find that some philosophical texts are concerned with theory assessment, and the translator can understand the philosophical concept as outlining a certain critical dialectic concerning candidate theories with the *objectivity clause*. Or, in the case of texts by Particularists of a certain sort, the translator may understand that the author leaves the theory variable blank but employs a philosophical concept to identify considerations that are relevant to philosophical decisions. So understood, any candidate theory that is agreeable to the author would have to satisfy the various considerations that she brings to bear, or the Particularist's "theory" might be a type of inductive record of such past considerations.

When we consider the definition of a concept like GOOD from the perspective of the text-type of philosophy, we enter this investigation with text-type theoretic constraints on the type of answer in which we are interested. If a term such as "good" has a function in philosophical texts that is text-type theoretic, it must articulate relevant considerations and theories. For details on the anatomy of this concept, we must examine how it functions to structure philosophical texts. If we survey philosophical texts, we find that there is no apparent axiological constraint on the type of theory this concept articulates. Philosophers employ "good" (and its negative correlate, "bad") to articulate many different types of theories that they distinguish. The only apparent commonality to all employments is that the theories articulated with this term have a world-to-theory direction of fit. Canonically, we can specify the semantics of the concept of GOOD thus:

> Ordinary symbol *s* refers to an item *x* that falls *within* a universal and general theory *t* that has a *world-to-theory* direction of fit, *in accordance with the relevant considerations*.

To understand "good" in a philosophical text is to understand it in terms of this rule. "Good" is just one ordinary symbol, *s*. If another symbol in the same or distinct corpus of texts functions in this same manner, it has the same conceptual content of "good" qua text-type theory of philosophy.

When we turn to a concept such as ETHICS, given the text-type theoretic confines of our question, we attempt to identify how the terms that express this concept ("ethics," "ethical," "ethic") function philosophically. In light of this identification we see that in the corpus of philosophical texts (which includes classic texts in the history of philosophy, and textbooks for students) there is a series of distinctive theories articulated with this concept. But whatever concept "ethics" expresses, it is far more constrained than GOOD. But what do ethical theories have in common? Such theories are distinguished from other normative or evaluative theories (such as aesthetic theories), yet there is a great variance among ethical theories. If philosophy as a type of text is intrinsically concerned with the debate of theories, then one sure way to characterize the theories articulated by a philosophical concept is by virtue of what they debate. But here we run into problems, for such theories even differ on what they take to be the focus of the debate. The only way out of this conundrum is to look to the common denominators of such theories, as the axiological characterization of the debate. Philosophical disagreement would thus consist in a disagreement over what theory satisfies this basic characteristic of the debate in the light of relevant considerations that are objectively persuasive. In other words, the disagreement centers on theories, or reasons, or both. There is a wide range of ethical theories in the history of philosophy: ethical egoism, divine command theory, deontological theories, virtue theories, and consequentialist theories, not to mention the theories of applied ethics, such as environmental ethics, nursing ethics, and business ethics. The task before us has both a historical and a distinctly institutional character. Given the extremely wide range of theories articulated with a term like "ethics" and its cognates, whatever is the common denominator of such theories would also be *very* broad. My suggestion is that the common denominator of all such theories is that they are theories that are in some way, however tenuous, chosen for their social implications. This is not an argument. It is an observation. Making a strong case for the common denominator of such theories is not something I can do here. It is the type of task that historians of philosophy can attend to and converge on if they consider a broad sample of textual data. But, for the sake of argument, let us assume that this observation is correct. If this is the correct characterization of the axiological differentia of the concept expressed by "ethical," the concept of the ETHICAL can be specified thus:

> Ordinary symbol *s* refers to an item *x* that falls within a universal and general theory *t* that has a *world-to-theory* direction of fit, which is selected for its social implications, *in accordance with the relevant considerations*.

The inherent translatability of philosophy as a type of text and the indeterminacy of linguistic meaning implies that we can take into account all manner of institutionally relevant considerations to narrow down the

range of options for the axiological differentia. Such considerations may include findings of cross-cultural research. If, for instance, we find in the history of Chinese philosophy a term that articulates theories with the same direction of fit, valence, and (lack of) extratheoretic constraint as "ethics," and that it is associated with a range of theories that partially but not wholly overlaps with the batch of theories associated with a term like "ethics" in the Western tradition, we would have excellent evidence that what we have is one philosophical debate expressed in differing cultural contexts. As the axiological differentia of philosophical theories captures the common point of reference in opposing theories in a philosophical debate, we have excellent reason to take the common denominator of all such theories as the common axiological differentia for both terms and to regard them as textually synonymous.

Objectivity in Philosophy

According to the view I am urging, text-types constitute Archimedean points for institutional avenues of inquiry, for they make it possible for us to pursue these avenues of inquiry across languages and cultures. There is nothing more foundational for an institution of inquiry than its text-type. Text-types provide considerations that help scholars adjudicate among different specimens of their type of text. For instance, when philosophers assess philosophical writing, they adjudicate their success based on whether they present reasons and considerations that are objectively persuasive. Philosophers usually agree that mere psychological inventories of feelings and thoughts do not constitute philosophy, for they do not even approach the ideal of objective persuasion. This agreement is based on institutional knowledge of the text-type of philosophy. Philosophers are often in disagreement over what satisfies this ideal of the philosophical text. This is because they have typically not taken into account the various features of philosophical concepts conceived as devices of textual translation.

According to TTPC, philosophical theories are like pictures. Normative and evaluative theories are held up as standards against which the world is to be judged, while nonnormative, nonevaluative philosophical theories seek consistency with the world. As standards of the world, normative and evaluative theories are often held to be immune from empirical conformation. If TTPC is correct, they yet must be consistent with such empirical contingencies as their axiological differentiae are characterizable as in some descriptive fashion. A failure to be consistent with such empirical contingencies would count against their being universal and general theories of the relevant sort. In specifying that philosophical theories are characterized by the criteria of universality and generality, TTPC provides us ways that enable us to assess whether any

philosophical theory lives up to its philosophical aspirations relative to its axiological differentia.

Here is an illustration. I suggested that we understand the axiological differentia of ethical theories in terms of a concern for social implications. This, *ex hypothesi*, characterizes what is distinctive about ethical theories. Theories so distinguished might not excel in every way in this respect. This type of excellence would be reserved for theories that are *alethically* ethical. Given that the axiological differentia is only one aspect of what makes for a philosophical theory, it would be reasonable for us to expect that theories with a certain axiological differentia excel in light of other considerations that define philosophical theories. All such theories would thus have a chance at being true. As philosophical theories are universal and general, it would be reasonable to expect that they be universal and general in their understanding and application of the axiological differentia. Call this the *test of philosophy*. Thus, if ethical theories are in fact characterized by their social concern, we would rightly expect that ethical theories be universal and general in their grasp of social phenomena. If they arbitrarily left out from their picture of the ideal state beings that are perfectly capable of being social, then such theories would fail in their universality and generality in respect of the axiological differentia of ethical theories. Or if such a theory truncates its depiction of the social in a manner that artificially leaves out motives and considerations that are constitutive of the social (say, for instance, impartial considerations or motives of self-sacrifice and benevolence), then the picture will also fail in universality and generality, with respect to the axiological differentia. Ethical theories that are anthropocentric, or egoistic, would arguably fail the test of the proposed axiological differentia of ethical theories in light of the universality and generality criteria contained in TTPC.

One might raise the following objection: If the axiological differentia, universality, and generality characterize philosophical theories, how can any philosophical theory fail to exemplify these putative virtues? The proposed test might seem to take us from an account of the semantics of philosophical theories to an account of what makes them true, but it seems that the account provided cannot show any space between what counts as a philosophical theory and what can be true in philosophy. In response to this concern, we can note that there are two ways that we can identify a philosophical theory. First, we can look to the paradigm cases of such theories in the canon. Second, once we have identified what terms in specific languages function as key philosophical terms in philosophical texts relative to text-type theoretic considerations, we can identify candidate philosophical theories based on the words used to articulate them in texts that we decide to read as philosophical texts. We could thus recognize in a student's essay, for instance, that when the student talks about what is "moral" he is articulating some putative philosophical theory with the term "moral" as understood along text-type theoretic

lines. It does not follow that the theory articulated in such an essay will display all the virtues we find in canonical cases. Thus, by the second means, we will find many theories that fail what I have called the test of philosophy.

This response in turn might lead to an additional objection, which is that if the canonical presentation of philosophical theories passes the test of philosophy, then there is little reason to go beyond the canon when ascertaining what is philosophically true. This objection overlooks two aspects of the theory I am proposing. The first is that what I have identified as the axiological differentia that defines the flavor of theories of certain sorts is defined by what is common to theories debated across cultures in the literature. This is historically contingent and will change. Second, some theories that will pass what I have called the test of philosophy will not be restricted to those of the canon. Moreover, the theories that pass the test of philosophy simply meet a minimum standard to be plausible. Objectivity and truth in philosophy will require a further test.

Once we cut away the vast number of ethical theories that fail the test of philosophy, we might be left with a batch of theories that are neither egoistic nor anthropocentric, for instance, but are yet perhaps incompatible—that is, assuming the axiological differentia of such theories is their social concern. Does this mean that we arrive at a narrower range of philosophical perspectives, each of which supports its own truth claims for which there is no common arbitrator? No. Each theory will have every other theory as an outside perspective from which its philosophical propositions can be assessed. An overlapping consensus of common propositional schemes can be identified (see Rawls 1996, 133–72) that are alike in all respects except for the theory that drives their functioning in a philosophical text. This refined stock of philosophical propositional schemes will in turn provide the foundations, or relevant considerations, that the objectively correct moral theory will systematize. The entire process is guided by the objectivist aspirations of the philosophical text-type, which makes the objective, perspective independent vindication of perspectives and their reasons the driving force behind its unique semantics. At this advanced stage, each theory that passes the initial test of the axiological differentia, universalized and generalized, still appeals to considerations independent of its own perspective, and the overlapping consensus among such theories marks out what perspective independence can amount to at this point. Even if no such single, final theory is forthcoming, we will have a final stock of philosophical propositional schemes that any objectively correct theory of the relevant axiological sort must satisfy. Such propositional schemes would constitute a batch of vindicated principles that we could defer to in addressing philosophical problems of the relevant sort. Our final answers via this textual endeavor will have the claim to objectivity, for they will be based

not on the contingencies of culture and language but rather on what we need to understand to translate philosophical texts.

What I have outlined here is an example that we can repeat for every philosophical concept with an axiological differentia. Given the universal and general thrust of the philosophical text, we would be informed by the philosophical text-type to begin such an investigation with thin philosophical concepts first. These will rule out many thicker philosophical concepts and their propositions. In the case of some philosophical concepts with no axiological differentia, such as *GOOD*, we cannot apply this method, but we would also not need to. For we would rightly treat the objective vindication of claims about goodness as the cumulative result of our investigations into the vindicated propositions of concepts with axiological differentia that articulate theories with a world-to-theory direction of fit: these claims would be shown to be true independently of any particular theory of goodness. The final vindicated theory of goodness would explain the ranked outcomes of these subsidiary investigations according to their level of generality and universality.

Objections

One might object that the argument that I present distorts the meaning and content of philosophical positions that it claims to be able to translate by treating all theories articulated with the same philosophical terms, such as "ethics," as though they were all involved in one debate.

This objection depends on the hidden assumption that we can each determine the meanings of our own semantic artifacts. But if the meanings of such artifacts are to be objective, they must be translatable, and if they are translatable, text-types are involved. As philosophy is a type of discourse where authors forward their own views, a text-type theoretic account of philosophy must make room for authors to forward theories and considerations of their own choosing. Given the objectivist aspirations of the discourse of philosophy, it cannot be the case that the philosophical project is wholly dependent on the perspective (i.e., theories) of philosophers. The semantic possibility of objectively persuasive reasons in favor of a philosophical theory implies that theories are to be vindicated *independently* of themselves. What this amounts to in philosophy is vindication in the light of *other* philosophical theories. But if the philosophical project aims at objectivity (and it must lest we read it as a type of introspective psychology), then there is nothing unfair about assessing the semantic significance of the content of philosophical texts in the light of considerations independent of theorists' commitments. Overall, the text-type of philosophy strikes the right balance between context sensitivity and objective considerations. It recognizes that the theories and reasons that philosophers put forward are chosen by them, but that

the significance and plausibility of such theories and reasons are not subjectively determined.

One might worry that if the account of determining the axiological differentia of philosophical concepts that I provide is correct, philosophical truth will shift easily with the fashion of the time, for every new philosophical theory articulated by a philosophical term will alter the population of theories, which will alter what all such theories have in common.

This is only a problem if we do not have institutional considerations that lead us to understand the point of departure in a debate broadly. The more broadly we understand a debate, the less likely it will be that a novel perspective in a debate will have a destabilizing influence. Understanding philosophical debate facilitated by text-types across languages and cultures leads to a broad conceptualization of a philosophical debate. The emphasis of the text-type of philosophy on generality and universality encourages a maximally inclusive and broad conceptualization of a debate as well. Given these two text-type theoretic considerations in determining the axiological differentia of a philosophical debate, it is likely that most innovations in philosophy will merely be variations on the already determined theme.

Despite our efforts to understand our debates broadly, there will be philosophical innovations and new theories put forward that alter the character of a debate. One might worry that this conceptual innovation is itself a type of relativism of the sort that Hales has argued for.

If a new option has the effect of altering the character of the debate, then the axiological differentia of the debate will have changed, and so will the philosophical concept that articulates the debate, on the TTPC account. Then the propositions consisting of the conceptual innovations will be fundamentally different from the ones that were expressed relative to the old set of theories in the literature. Philosophical relativism does not arise on this account, for it does not force us to recognize one and the same philosophical proposition as having differing truth-values according to differing theoretical commitments. Moreover, the text-type of philosophy provides us reasons to prefer the successor concept to the predecessor concept. As the successor concept represents a wider debate, which is more general in scope than its predecessor, the very universal and general thrust of philosophy favors it. The old philosophical truths articulated with the old concept would still be true given the debate that it represents, but the old concept would also represent a comparatively less philosophical form of the debate that is no longer relevant. Much like old currency, we relegate old concepts and their propositions to the status of museum pieces.

One might worry that such conceptual innovation will play havoc with translations, given that the concepts that are revised are those that are employed in the translation of philosophical texts.

Inscriptionally and linguistically, the conceptual revision in philosophy that comes about by the widening of a debate will not force us to revise our translations—if we appreciate the text-type theoretic nature of a philosophical debate as transcending language and culture. The addition of a new option to the debate in one language will lead us to revise our understanding of the debate across languages, and thus we will re-understand the old philosophical terms as expressing the widened philosophical concept.

This might seem implausible, as translating a philosophical text depends on understanding the theories in the text, and if such theories are formulated with philosophical terms, then conceptual revision will affect the theory we impute to textual agents. This would be a problem if we were unable to fix a theory to historical contingencies, such as the axiological differentia associated with a philosophical term in its day. The type of conceptual revision we must recognize that comes about by a widening of a debate does not prevent us from properly attending to historical questions. On the contrary, the question of what characterizes a debate is historical and a function of the batch of theories involved in a debate at some time. Perhaps if philosophical concepts were irreducible, conceptual revision of philosophical concepts would make it impossible for us but to revise our understanding of philosophical theories. TTPC puts forward a noncircular account of philosophical concepts, and thus we can eliminate philosophical terms from an articulation of a philosophical theory, giving due attention to the historical question of what characterized a debate at the time of the theory's debut.

Perhaps if the axiological differentia of a philosophical debate were not descriptively assessable but only characterizable by philosophical concepts, then we would have to confront a type of circularity that makes tracking conceptual change in philosophy indeterminate. But what is common to a debate, given the controversial and historically contingent nature of philosophical debates, can only be assessed by *describing* what is common in a debate, and philosophical concepts, according to TTPC, are not descriptive. If TTPC were a version of speaker relativism, philosophical concepts would be descriptive of theoretical commitments, but it is not a version of speaker relativism.

Thus historians of philosophy can fix the content of a philosophical theory by attending to historical and philological considerations. But yet, given the evolution of a philosophical debate, the *external* significance of the theory in the light of dialectical innovations can change. Far from being alarming, or strange, I submit that this is what occurs. When we read the texts of ancient philosophers and teach them in our philosophy classes, we explicate their theoretical concerns in the light of historical and philological research, but we conceptualize the philosophical significance of such theories in the light of what has happened philosophically since, and not simply in the light of what was philosophically salient in their

day. If we did not read philosophical texts this way, it would be difficult to explain why the texts of Plato or Aristotle should continue to be philosophically relevant to philosophical debates today, though culturally, linguistically, and theoretically, they are alien to us.

One might argue that the account I am forwarding is relativistic in another way. According to TTPC, it would be the case that philosophers of times past or elsewhere *meant* something different by their philosophical terms from what we do today given the particulars of their world, the philosophical texts they had before them, and the range of theories before them. There are at least three different ways in which the ancients might have different meanings associated with their philosophical terminology. Not one causes problems for the argument I am presenting.

(1) Conceptual innovation in the light of a widening of a debate is one example in which philosophers of an earlier time could have meant something different from us. As argued, this does not result in relativism.

(2) According to TTPC, philosophically interesting terminology with distinctive linguistic meanings (responsive to cultural peculiarities, including the values of a society) can have the same text-type meaning if they function analogously in philosophical texts. Thus, for instance, while the ancient Greeks and contemporary English speakers refer to differing items by the terms ''eudaimonia'' and ''happiness,'' the terms can be translational equivalents in texts of philosophy if there is scholarly reason to hold that they can articulate theories with the same TTPC concept. The linguistic and cultural relativity of meaning of expressions in a language poses no obstacle to the culture-transcendence of philosophy, for TTPC.

(3) It may be that the ancients understood under the heading of ''philosophy'' a text-type different from the one we appreciate under this heading. Our text-type of philosophy would simply be a text-type different from the one the ancients called ''philosophy.'' Differences between how such text-types could be employed in evaluating and translating texts would be of the kind that separate how the text-types of poetry and of science approach the evaluation and translation of a text. Recognizing a plurality of text-types leads to a semantic pluralism. But this is not the familiar sort of relativism. Relativism in philosophy does not usually recognize a semantic pluralism. It is usually the view that one and the same proposition can have differing truth-values depending upon relativistic considerations. Propositions could not have the same meaning across different types of texts, according to text-type semantics, for their meaning is determinate only in light of their role in a text of a definite type. We could recognize text-type semantics as a type of semantic relativism, but it would be of a very unusual type, which relativizes meaning not to languages or cultures but to types of texts, thus allowing it to overcome the traditional versions of relativism, which relativize meaning to worldviews, languages, and cultures.

The critic might find this unsatisfactory, for if there can be several text-types called ''philosophy'' that are different, what is to say that the contemporary discipline of philosophy is formed around just one such text-type. If ''philosophers'' are working with multiple types of texts, there is no institutional cohesion to underwrite the type of institutional knowledge that is being argued for here.

Once we recognize the role of text-types in translation, we must recognize that texts can be read and translated according to multiple types, and thus it is no part of my argument to assume that the textual artifacts of philosophers are prone to just one text-type theoretic treatment. However, given the proliferation of types, we need to look to the most general type that can underwrite the research and textual concerns of a discipline, in part because the formality and slimness of a type renders it more employable in translation than competing accounts, but also because it is the most synoptic. It would be surprising if there were a thinner, synoptic account of the text-type answering to what philosophers are interested in today different from the one that I have put forward because it is so general. The account of the contemporary text-type of philosophy that I have proposed does not specify what types of topics philosophers must be interested in; it does not specify the content of such theories or what philosophers must consider, aside from noting that philosophical theory is of an abstract variety and the considerations in favor of such theories aim at being objectively persuasive. It even makes room for a discourse that is agnostic about theories, and is purely dialectical. A more fitting account of philosophy would be surprising.

Conclusion

One reason philosophers might not have thought that translation is institutionally constrained is that they have often tried to underwrite the objectivity of meaning and translation by metaphysics: properties, states of affairs, beliefs, mental states, or physical objects are proposed as meanings. The motivation for the turn to metaphysics to underwrite meaning and translation is to secure objectivity. If the semantics of a language is reducible to some part of reality, then not only is meaning shown to be objective (it would seem) but translation can be understood as a process of coordinating linguistic practices with this independent reality. But this backfires, or so I have argued. If linguistic practices are different, and if meaning is a determinate feature of linguistic practices, it becomes difficult to explain how content expressible in one language can be re-expressed in a different practice. What started as a triumphant bid to show the objectivity of meaning fuels speculation that what we have, in languages, is a type of objectivity that is at best linguistically relative and inimical to successful, determinate translation.

Text-types are the portals between cultures. They allow us to gracefully accept linguistic and cultural diversity and translate texts with specific translational goals in mind. This modesty also allows them to be Archimedean points, for they are not comprehensive doctrines within a textually based discipline but rather the common point according to which texts within a discipline can be properly read and translated.

In this article, I have put forth an account of the text-type of philosophy, an account of philosophical concepts as features of such texts, and an account of how the text-type of philosophy with its features can be employed to weed through competing philosophical theories. If the account that I have put forward is correct, there is yet important work for philosophers to perform. The generation of objective philosophical knowledge is only possible, on this account, by taking stock of the history of philosophy as such. Thus, to be philosophers solving problems we need to be philosophers reflecting on our textual past. But there are advantages to this. We can exorcise ourselves of the unfounded notion that philosophy, ethics in particular, is a systematic reflection on the underlying rules and values of our culture. It is a rare educated person who believes that a good upbringing in society, coupled with some analytic skills, leads to excellence in scientific and mathematical knowledge. Our best epistemic pursuits are international, translinguistic inquiries organized around a type of text. Philosophy is no exception.

Department of Philosophy
York University
S448 Ross, 4700 Keele Street
Toronto, Ontario M3J 1P3
Canada
shyamr@yorku.ca

Acknowledgments

References

Anscombe, G. E. M. 1963. *Intention*. 2nd ed. New York: Cornell University Press.
Appiah, Kwame Anthony. 2004. "Thick Translation." In *The Translation Studies Reader*, edited by Lawrence Venuti, 389–401. New York: Routledge.
Austin, J. L. 1979a. "Are There A Priori Concepts?" In *Philosophical Papers*, 3rd ed., edited by J. O. Urmson and G. J. Warnock, 32–54. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

———. 1979b. "*ΕΓΑΘΟΝ* and *ΕΥΔΑΙΜΟΝΙΑ* in the *Ethics* of Aristotle." In *Philosophical Papers*, 3rd ed., edited by J. O. Urmson and G. J. Warnock, 1–31. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ayer, A. J. 1946. *Language, Truth and Logic*. New York: Dover.

Billington, Ray. 1997. *Understanding Eastern Philosophy*. London: Routledge.

Boyd, Richard N. 1988. "How to Be a Moral Realist." In *Essays on Moral Realism*, edited by Geoffrey Sayre-McCord, 181–228. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Chomsky, Noam. 1969. "Quine's Empirical Assumptions." In *Words and Objections: Essays on the Work of W. V. Quine*, edited by Donald Davidson and Jaakko Hintikka, 53–68. Dordrecht: D. Reidel.

Cohen, Stewart. 1986. "Knowledge and Context." *Journal of Philosophy* 83:574–83.

———. 1987. "Knowledge, Context, and Social Standards." *Synthese* 73: 3–26.

———. 1988. "How to Be a Fallibilist." *Philosophical Perspectives* 2:581–605.

———. 1998. "Contextualist Solutions to Epistemological Problems: Scepticism, Gettier, and the Lottery." *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 76, no. 2 (June): 289–306.

———. 2005. "Knowledge, Speaker and Subject." *Philosophical Quarterly* 55, no. 219:199–212.

Davidson, Donald. 1996. "What Metaphors Mean." In *The Philosophy of Language*, edited by Aloysius Martinich, 415–26. New York: Oxford University Press.

———. 2001. "Truth and Meaning." In *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation*, 17–36. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

DeRose, Keith. 1995. "Solving the Skeptical Problem." *Philosophical Review* 104, no. 1:1–52.

———. 2004. "The Problem with Subject-Sensitive Invariantism." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 68, no. 2:346–50.

———. 2005a. "Bamboozled by Our Own Words: Semantic Blindness and Some Objections to Contextualism." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 73, no. 2:316–38.

———. 2005b. "The Ordinary Language Basis for Contextualism, and the New Invariantism." *Philosophical Quarterly* 55, no. 219:172–98.

Derrida, Jacques. 1981. "Plato's Pharmacy." In *Dissemination*, translated by Barbara Johnson, 61–172. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Dreier, James. 1990. "Internalism and Speaker Relativism." *Ethics* 101:6–26.

Everett, Daniel L. 2005. "Cultural Constraints on Grammar and Cognition in Pirahã: Another Look at the Design Features of Human Language." *Current Anthropology* 46, no. 4 (August–October): 621–36.

Frege, Gottlob. 1980. *The Foundations of Arithmetic: A Logico-Mathematical Enquiry into the Concept of Number*. 2nd rev. ed. Translated by J. L. Austin. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Gaudet, Eve. 2006. *Quine on Meaning*. London: Continuum.

Hacker, P. M. S. 1996. *Wittgenstein's Place in Twentieth-Century Analytic Philosophy*. Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell.

Halbfass, Wilhelm. 1988. *India and Europe: An Essay in Understanding*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Hales, Steven D. 2006. *Relativism and the Foundations of Philosophy*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

Hare, Richard M. 1952. *The Language of Morals*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Harman, Gilbert, and Judith Jarvis Thomson. 1996. *Moral Relativism and Moral Objectivity: Great Debates in Philosophy*. Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell.

Holmes, James S. 1988. "The Name and Nature of Translation Studies." In *Translated! Papers on Literary Translation and Translation Studies*, 67–80. Amsterdam: Rodopi.

Horgan, Terence, and Mark Timmons. 1991. "New Wave Moral Realism Meets Moral Twin Earth." *Journal of Philosophical Research* 16:447–65.

———. 1996. "From Moral Realism to Moral Relativism in One Easy Step." *Critica* 28, no. 83:3–39.

Humberstone, I. L. 1992. "Direction of Fit." *Mind* 101:59–84.

Katz, Jerrold J. 1990. *The Metaphysics of Meaning, Representation and Mind*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

———. 1993. "Reply to Gibson." In *Naturalism and Normativity*, edited by Enrique Villanueva, 174–79. Atascadero, Calif.: Ridgeview.

———. 2004. *Sense, Reference, and Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kripke, Saul A. 1980. *Naming and Necessity*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Kuhn, Thomas S. 1970. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

———. 1983. "Commensurability, Comparability, Communicability." In *Proceedings of the 1982 Biennial Meeting of the Philosophy of Science Association*, edited by Peter D. Asquith and Thomas Nickles, 2:669–88. East Lansing, Mich.: Philosophy of Science Association.

Lance, Mark Norris, and John O'Leary-Hawthorne. 1997. *The Grammar of Meaning: Normativity and Semantic Discourse*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

LaPorte, Joseph. 2004. *Natural Kinds and Conceptual Change*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Laviosa-Braithwaite, Sara. 2001. "Universals of Translation." In *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, edited by Mona Baker and Kirsten Malmkjær, 288–91. London: Routledge.

Lewis, David. 1996. "Elusive Knowledge." *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 74, no. 4:549–67.

Lienhardt, Godfrey. 1958. "Modes of Thought." In *The Institutions of Primitive Society*, edited by E. E. Evans-Pritchard, 95–107. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Moore, G. E. 1903. *Principia Ethica*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Neubert, Albrecht, and Gregory M. Shreve. 1992. *Translation as Text*. Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press.

Phillips, David. 1997. "How to Be a Moral Relativist." *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 35:393–417.

———. 1998. "The Middle Ground in Moral Semantics." *American Philosophical Quarterly* 35, no. 2 (April): 141–55.

Putnam, Hilary. 1975. "The Meaning of 'Meaning.'" In *Language, Mind, and Knowledge*, edited by Keith Gunderson, 131–93, Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science, vol. 7. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Quine, Willard Van Orman. 1960. *Word and Object*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

———. 1969a. "Natural Kinds." In *Ontological Relativity and Other Essays*, 114–38. New York: Columbia University Press.

———. 1969b. "Reply to Chomsky." In *Words and Objections: Essays on the work of W. V. Quine*, edited by Donald Davidson and Jaakko Hintikka, 302–11. Dordrecht: D. Reidel.

———. 1996. "Meaning." In *The Philosophy of Language*, edited by Aloysius Martinich, 446–55. New York: Oxford University Press.

Ranganathan, Shyam. 2007. *Ethics and the History of Indian Philosophy*. Delhi: Motlial Banarsidass.

Rawls, John. 1996. *Political Liberalism*. Paperbound ed. New York: Columbia University Press.

Salmon, Nathan U. 2005. "Two Conceptions of Semantics." In *Semantics vs. Pragmatics*, edited by Z. G. Szabó, 317–28. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Silverstein, Michael. 1979. "Language Structure and Linguistic Ideology." In *The Elements: A Parasession on Linguistic Units and Levels*, edited by P. R. Clyne, W. F. Hanks, and C. L. Hofbauer, 193–247. Chicago: Chicago Linguistic Society.

Smith, Michael. 1994. *The Moral Problem*. Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell.

Snell-Hornby, Mary, ed. 1988. *Translation Studies: An Integrated Approach*. Amsterdam: J. Benjamins.

Thomson, Judith Jarvis. 1997. "The Right and the Good." *Journal of Philosophy* 94, no. 6 (June): 273–98.

Tsering, Migmar. 1995. "Co-Translations: Its Value and Problems." In *Buddhist Translation: Problems and Perspectives*, edited by Doboom Tulku, 205–14. New Delhi: Manohar.

van Roojen, Mark. 2006. "Knowing Enough to Disagree: A New Response to the Moral Twin Earth Argument." In *Oxford Studies in Metaethics*, vol. 1, edited by Russ Shafer-Landau, 161–94. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Velleman, J. David. 1996. "The Possibility of Practical Reason." *Ethics* 106, no. 4 (July): 694–726.

Wedgwood, Ralph. 2006. "The Meaning of 'Ought.'" In *Oxford Studies in Metaethics*, vol. 1, edited by Russ Shafer-Landau, 127–60. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Whorf, Benjamin Lee. 2001. "The Relation of Habitual Thought and Behavior to Language." In *Linguistic Anthropology: A Reader*, edited by Alessandro Duranti, 363–81. Malden, Mass.: Blackwell.

Williams, Bernard. 1985. *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 1958. *Philosophical Investigations*. 2nd ed. Translated by G. E. M Anscombe. Edited by G. E. M. Anscombe, Rush Rhees, and G. H. von Wright. New York: Macmillan.

———. 1960. *Preliminary Studies for the "Philosophical Investigations": Generally Known as the Blue and Brown Books*. 2nd ed. Edited by Rush Rhees. New York: Harper and Row.

Wong, David B. 1984. *Moral Relativity*. Berkeley: University of California Press.