

AI, philosophy and the disequilibrium of translation

Abstract

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What makes the human being human? What would the mark of human knowledge be? In addition to the dominance of education oriented by the global economy, another imminent threat that affects education today is AI. Chat GPT has become part of our daily lives, and it seems to help people think and work efficiently. Due to the rise of Chat GPT, there has arisen the claim that foreign language learning is unnecessary. If Chat GPT instantly translates one language to another, what is the point of the human being taking the labour of translation? In response, I shall argue that translation is more than the matching of different language systems. Undergoing ourselves the process of translation and undergoing the sense of a gap between languages is an important part – perhaps the most important part – of translation, and this is something AI cannot do. Translation puts emphasis on the gap, the unknown and the untranslatable, which, paradoxically perhaps, is the condition of “mutual understanding.” Following Stanley Cavell’s ordinary language philosophy, I shall thematize this broader and richer sense of translation as *philosophy as translation* (Standish and Saito 2017). I propose a shift in the conception of dialogue from the symmetrical discourse of mutuality and presumed commensurability to the acceptance of a relationship of disequilibrium – one that acknowledges an unbridgeable gap and the sense of loss in communication. The smooth and effortless process of translation that is achieved by ChatGPT not only cannot respond to such disequilibrium but also covers it over. The sense of struggle over words, the sense of loss the untranslatable brings, do not mean that we must stop thinking or that the unknown is to be mystified: rather such experience provides the chance of creating judgment out of chaos and triggers our efforts for finding common ground in meanings in the absence of an already given shared ground.

Reference

Standish, Paul and Saito, Naoko (eds). 2017. *Stanley Cavell and Philosophy as Translation: The Truth is translated*. (Rowman & Littlefield International, Ltd.).

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