

Benjamin, Agamben, and the Paradox of Translation

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Abstract: In his paper, "Benjamin, Agamben, and the Paradox of Translation," Paolo Bartoloni offers a theoretical discourse on translation that goes beyond the traditional precincts of linguistics and literary theory as well as the disciplines of cultural studies and postcolonial theory. Bartoloni argues that more recently, the discourse on translation has begun to incorporate epistemological concerns, dealing not only with language but also with subjectivity and ethics. At the root of this theoretical articulation of translation are the essays "The Task of the Translator" ("Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers") by Walter Benjamin and other reflections on translation by Martin Heidegger, especially in "Anaximander's Saying" ("Der Spruch des Anaximander") and the *Heraclitus Seminar*. Bartoloni interrogates Benjamin's reflection on translation by exposing the paradox and the philosophical conundrum of Benjamin's discussion, whose significance, and not only for the reception of translation, remains to be thoroughly conceptualized. Bartoloni provides an interpretation of Benjamin's notion of "pure language" by connecting and contrasting it with Giorgio Agamben's discussion of "voice" and with the Heideggerian notion of language as the "ringing stillness." The result is the sketching of an epistemological and philosophical function for translating that, although including linguistic and literary preoccupations, responds directly and specifically to key ontological and metaphysical issues.

Paolo BARTOLONI

Benjamin, Agamben, and the Paradox of Translation

This article ends with two questions -- "can the process of translation be one of those instances in which 'language speaks itself as language'? In other words, can translating be the moment when language stays still in order to reach out, in order to become and in order to meet and be met by subjectivity?" These questions are also at the basis of my thinking about translation as an epistemological and philosophical category in the context of Walter Benjamin and Giorgio Agamben's understanding of language and subjectivity. Translation is based -- as Benjamin intimated in his "The Task of the Translator" ("Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers" 1923) -- on an exhilarating paradox and a fundamental metaphysical conundrum. His overall thesis could be summarized by the principle -- which in Benjamin's case is no more than a messianic belief -- that translation is possible, indeed necessary, because all languages are connected to one original language. This Benjamin calls "pure language" ("die reine Sprache"). But perhaps "related" is a better word than "connected" since in Benjamin's thought the sense of origin and genealogy, of kinship (*Verwandtschaft*) is strong. It is no accident that Benjamin characterizes human languages as languages after the Fall. In positing a before and an after, Benjamin introduces a temporal chronology and also a direct line of *discendenza* ("relation"). Pure language exists before languages and languages are born out as a direct result of the Fall. This assumption enables Benjamin to establish a connection and a link between pure language and languages and also to postulate the existence of pure language in between the folds (or cracks) of languages. There is no doubt that the discourse on translation as articulated by Benjamin in "The Task of the Translator" is marked by temporality and a temporal movement: "in defining the more restricted usage [of kinship] the concept of origin remains indispensable" (*Illuminations* 74). What is less clear, but also potentially more significant, is the lesson that one can learn from this movement and how the temporality of the separation between pure language and languages is re-described in the simultaneous synchronicity and diachronicity of languages or, as Benjamin calls it, in the "suprahistorical kinship of languages" ("überhistorische Verwandtschaft der Sprachen") (*Illuminations* 74). Two questions arise as a direct consequence of the linguistic fracture: is this separation between an elemental language and its many derivatives still apparent within languages? And if so, how does this separation, and the attendant differences, manifest themselves in languages?

Benjamin claims that the essential relatedness of languages is predicated on "intention." He gives the example of the German word *Brot* and the French word *pain*, remarking that both languages "intend the same object" and yet it is the mode of this intention that varies and that ultimately generates a different meaning and experience of the object "bread." If the linguistic kinship is based on the communality of an original "intention" configured in the "naming" of pure language, the linguistic difference is marked by a separation and a distancing through which the original intention is hidden and buried by cultural and experiential determinants. These separations and differences are nevertheless brought to light *through* and *in* translation. In Benjamin's words: "in the individual, unsupplemented languages ["bei den einzelnen, den unergänzten Sprachen"], meaning is never found in relative independence, as in individual words or sentences; rather, it is in a constant state of flux -- until it is able to emerge as pure language from the harmony of all the various modes of intention. Until then, it remains hidden in the languages. If, however, these languages continue to grow in this manner until the end of their time, it is translation that catches fire on the eternal life of the works and the perpetual renewal of language" (*Illuminations* 75). Translation is the moment at which pure language appears, just for a moment, on the surface of languages only to plunge again quickly into the deep abyss of un-speakability. But by the same token Benjamin speaks also of pure language as that which incessantly signals its presence in the process of *becoming* of languages; at that instantiation, that is, when languages mingle with each other in the constant transcendental leaning towards the reunion with pure language. If on the one hand pure language is the essential, the beginning and the origin, on the other it is also the *becoming*, the fluid, the incessant and the indistinct. Is the passage from essential origin to potenti-

ality the result of the linguistic fracture, the necessary tribute that pure language must pay in order to be itself again? But if this is the case, pure language itself, and not only unsupplemented languages, exists in the hope of re-uniting with itself. While the notion of languages' main purpose as that of going back to the origin is plausible, the thinking of pure language as that which wishes to go back to itself is ambiguous (on potentiality and Agamben's thought, see, e.g., Bartoloni <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol5/iss1/2/>>.). Assuming that pure language is indivisible, the thought of pure language re-uniting with itself is contradictory and nonsensical. And yet, this is precisely what Benjamin appears to argue. There are two movements towards the same goal; one is that of languages toward pure language and the other one is that of pure language after the Fall toward pure language before the Fall. If this is right, the linguistic fracture is then a double fracture, one that indicates a separation within the origin too and that decrees the divisibility of pure language. The question is therefore not only how translation enables a reconstitution of pure language through unsupplemented languages, but also on how translation allows pure language to reconstitute itself and, as a supplement of the latter question, on how pure language before the Fall differs from pure language after the Fall.

It is precisely here, at this juncture -- which is also the quintessential example of philosophical mediation -- that a reconsideration of Western transcendence and metaphysics can take place. By positing an entity which is simultaneously ontic -- "What you understand by the phenomenal sense of the word *genesis* we can also label as ontic" (Heidegger, *Heraclitus Seminar* 8) -- and ontological, the very opposition between sensible and supersensible and empirical and *a priori*, on which Western metaphysics is based, is challenged. It is from here that a new discussion of ontology can commence. The task of the philosopher, therefore, is no longer concerned exclusively with negotiating the incorporeal and the corporeal but with engaging the incorporeal, the corporeal and the mode of their simultaneous occurrence. And the challenge is no longer limited to the analysis of pure language and languages. A new ontology and a new metaphysics must include by necessity the *becoming* of language as well, that is the simultaneous occurrence of pure language and languages. This is the ontology of potentiality: Every language is translatable potentially into another and, ultimately, back into pure language. Translation's very existence revolves around this principle: "translation thus ultimately serves the purpose of expressing the central reciprocal relationship between languages" (Benjamin, *Illuminations* 73). The paradox stems from the fact that pure language is lost -- some would argue, Benjamin included -- irretrievably. The metaphysical conundrum originates from the postulation that the existence of pure language is predicated upon its very ineffability. This postulate is not without analogies to the mystic belief in the centrality of creation and therefore on the theological assumption that knowledge -- in its purest form -- can only be knowledge of God, of that which pre-exists nature and humanity. It is in this sense that one can understand the emphasis that during the history of philosophy has been placed on the concept of the surface and on the purity of an unadulterated *tabula* as the metaphor of the *Whole*. It is after the creation that the *tabula* begins to be inscribed, begins to be narrated in the image of God. It is in God's image that nature can be analyzed in order to regain the knowledge of the supreme Being.

It is in this sense that an analogy can be drawn between mysticism and interpretation. The search for the pure surface is also the task that the Austrian art critic Ernst Gombrich articulated as the purpose of the art critic, and the function that Benjamin ascribed to the philosopher. Both art critic and philosopher assumed that the essential and purest form of interpretation is that which ultimately deletes the work being interpreted. As memory undoes the life of a person by exposing its most profound secrets, so interpretation strips the work of art of its superfluous *realia*. This equates with appropriating the work and re-writing it backward, from the end to the beginning. Thus, the interpreter becomes the author, or perhaps more appropriately, the translator whose task is to undo the work in order to retrieve the essence hidden behind layers and layers of words and colors, in order -- by following to the letter Hofmannsthal's dictum -- to reach the depth that lies at the surface of things. If the author starts from the essence and gradually and inevitably leaves it behind in the urge to possess and know it, the interpreter and the translator starts from fiction and erases it to know and possess the essence. These two processes are complementary

and necessary and one could not exist without the other. In order to arrive at the essence, the essence must be disfigured, defaced, exiled. The essence must be banned by celebrating it in the work of art. It is in this sense that literature, music the visual arts are simply acts celebrating the negativity of what they have purposefully removed. And yet it is precisely because of this removal that the essence will be gained to life through the act of interpretation and translation. Benjamin's words on translation must be read in this context: "We may call this connection [between original and translation] a natural one, or, more specifically, a vital connection. Just as the manifestations of life are intimately connected with the phenomenon of life without being of importance to it, a translation issues from the original -- not so much from its life as from its afterlife. For a translation comes later than the original, and since the important works of world literature never find their chosen translator at the time of their origin, their translation marks their stage of continued life. The idea of life and afterlife in works of art should be regarded with an entirely unmetaphorical objectivity" (*Illuminations* 72).

The essence will not have any meaning unless it is violated by art and reconstituted by interpretation. But this must be a particular kind of interpretation, one that does not talk about the work, one that does not paraphrase it. It is rather an interpretation that rewinds the work, that is exactly the work going back in time. It is indeed a translation that searches for the essence by stripping the work bare, going back to the origin and to the infancy of the work. It might seem a paradox, but the work of art can only find the essence by banning the essence. "The work is the death mask of its conception," said Benjamin in *One Way Street (Reflections* 81). I believe that Giorgio Agamben articulates something similar when in the "Introduction" to *Infancy and History* he argues that: "Every written work can be regarded as the prologue (or rather, the broken cast [*cera persa*]) of a work never penned, and destined to remain so, because later works, which in turn will be the prologues (*preludi*) or the moulds (*calchi*) for other absent works, represent only sketches (*schegge*) or death masks (*maschere mortuarie*). The absent work (*l'opera assente*), although it is unplaceable in any precise chronology, thereby constitutes the written works as *prolegomena* or *paralipomena* of a non-existent text; or, in a more general sense, as *parerga* which find their true meaning only in the context of an illegible *ergon*. To take Montaigne's fine image, these are the frieze of grotesque (*la cornice di grottesche*) around an unpainted portrait, or, in the spirit of the pseudo-Platonic letter, the counterfeit of a book which cannot be written (*la contraffazione di uno scritto impossibile*)" (3). For Agamben the actual work is nothing other than a "death mask" which represents the *imago* of a non-existent work, in other words, of a work that has never been written and will never be written. This is, Agamben argues, the destiny of all written works whose ultimate essence will never be fully revealed because it is inscribed, it belongs, to their illegible counterparts. The *ergon* Agamben speaks of cannot be read simply because it cannot be written. As soon as the attempt to write it is undertaken, the *ergon* is transformed into its death mask and its essence is disfigured by the act of writing it. While Borges stumbled on this thought when he wrote Pierre Menard and penned stories about non-existent stories, Benjamin resolved to confront the artistic aporia face on not by writing about non-existing texts but by placing the ciphers of erasure *par excellence*, that is the process of translation and that of citation on the critical map. "Citation," writes Agamben discussing Benjamin's essay on Karl Kraus, "appears as an eminently destructive procedure whose task is 'not to shelter, but to purify, to rip out of context, to destroy.' Its destructive force, however, is that of justice; to the very degree to which citation tears speech from its context, destroying it, it also returns it to its origin" (*Potentialities* 152). If the *ergon* cannot be written, it can perhaps be spied in the process of breaking its death mask open.

In theological terms, cosmological and psychological knowledge are at the service of theology and can only be predicated on something pre-existing such knowledge. While cosmological and psychological knowledge, or, as Kant calls it, ontic knowledge, are arrived at through the sensible, through experiencing the sensible, ontological knowledge, the quintessential and all-inclusive sphere of knowledge in which beings and Being are included, is transcendental. The experience of nature and human beings (cosmology and psychology) cannot be conducted, cannot be conceived without the existence of nature and beings. How can ontological experience and ontological

knowledge be achieved? In other words, is it possible to think of a Kantian *a priori* and know it through ontic experience and ontic knowledge? The book of nature is the first step. And yet, religion has been quite explicit in saying that knowledge arrived at through cosmological and psychological study is legitimate and yet inadequate and incomplete. It is here that the distinction between theology and philosophy has to be made. First, philosophy divides ontological knowledge further by asking whether it is possible to predicate an ontology as such and not as transcendence. The reflection on language is the centerpiece of this study and, I believe, the challenge that Kant posits to himself in his analysis of metaphysics. Is there a language that pre-exists language? Further, is there a language that pre-exists a non-transcendental understanding of language? Benjamin appears to believe so when he distinguishes in language from through language and when he differentiates between supplemented languages and unsupplemented languages. Benjamin's thought on translation is the project of defining a potentiality that actualizes itself in-between the effable and the ineffable, and of a mode of language that positions itself in the temporal interim of a now that subsumes its appearance in its continuous disappearance. This is the simultaneity of effable and ineffable where the unsayable turns into the sayable as the sayable reverts to the unsayable. But what if the unsayable of language is not the ineffability of pure language but rather the quiddity, the essence, of language itself? In other words, is it philosophically binding and analytically imperative to predicate an ontology of being, and as such an ontology of language, on the quintessential metaphysical opposition sensible/supersensible and effable/ineffable?

Agamben's *experimentum linguae*, as expounded in *Infancy and History*, is nothing other than the philosophical effort to wrestle potentiality from the grip of metaphysics and place it in the realm of facticity. The linguistic split that characterizes the work of Benjamin still drives the work of Agamben, and yet in the latter the split is not so much between pure language and languages. It is rather a fracture inherent in human language. Agamben sees the locus of this fracture in infancy and conducts his own *experimentum linguae* within the space where, as he says, "the limits of language are [to be] found not outside language, in the direction of its referent, but in an experience of language as such, in its pure self-reference" (*Infancy and History* 5). It is essential to quote a central passage of Agamben's thought on language in its entirety: "If every thought can be classified according to the way in which it articulates the question of the limits of language, the concept of infancy is then an attempt to think through these limits in a direction other than that of the vulgarly ineffable. The ineffable, the un-said, are in fact categories which belong exclusively to human language; far from indicating a limit of language, they express its invincible power of presupposition, the unsayable being precisely what language must presuppose in order to signify. The concept of infancy, on the contrary, is accessible only to a thought which has been purified, in the words of Benjamin writing to Buber, 'by eliminating the unsayable from language'. The singularity which language must signify is not something ineffable but something superlatively sayable: the *thing* of language" (*Infancy and History* 4).

Benjamin's letter to Buber that Agamben refers to was written in July 1916. It concerns Benjamin's collaboration with the journal *Der Jude* edited by Buber and, more importantly, issues of style and language. The sentence "by eliminating the unsayable from language" is part of a larger linguistic reflection in which Benjamin provides a first hint of what he will address more systematically in the essay "On Language as Such and On the Language of Man" of the same year. In the central section of the letter to Buber the idea of a language as nothing more than a mere instrument and tool, a subaltern means to the *causa* (the goal) of the signifier, is challenged by Benjamin. He opposes to this utilitarian language the magic, poetic and prophetic language, in other words the language that he sees as the essence and true reality of language. By eliminating the unsayable from language Benjamin cannot and does not mean the removal of the magic from language. Quite differently, he wishes to celebrate the epiphany of the unsayable attained by literally taking language to what denies itself to language. If on the one hand, Benjamin was concerned with eliminating the unsayable by reclaiming the sayability of pure language through the magical immediacy of language -- and a few years later through translation -- Agamben dispatches the unsayable through positing the philosophical reflection on language, not on a fracture between a pre-existing supersensible before and a phenomenological after but on the fracture between the

"now" of factic language. And yet the language Agamben speaks of as the connecting link between the "thing" of language and the ordinary experience of language, the infancy of language, is also a lost language, a mode, to be more correct, that continuously loses itself in its inherent status of interstitiality between semantic and semiotic, between language and discourse or, in other words, between recognition and comprehension. If on the one hand the metaphysical loss is centred in the utterability of a language that *is* in the presence of its incommunicability, on the other, that is in the realm of facticity, the loss is the inability to grasp the significance of a linguistic transition and to study the moment at which the essence of language says itself in the very process of un-saying itself. Both philosophical angles on language assume a pre-existing mode of language, but whereas in Benjamin what pre-exists human language is pure language, in Agamben what pre-exists language is the voice. The voice, as opposed to pure language, is not outside language but firmly ensconced in language, and its actuality is, according to Agamben, the true home of humanity and the cipher of an inalienable communality. On the other hand, the human voice has the potentiality to turn into language, which also means the potentiality to translate itself into grammar, into writing and discourse. It is the potentiality of transformation innate in human voice that distinguishes it from the voice of animals. Agamben locates the transition from voice to language in infancy; and it is in infancy that Agamben wishes to carry out his study of linguistic potentiality.

A philosophical thought revolving around the notion of relatedness, be it metaphysical or factual, not only gravitates by necessity to the principle of origin but also to the attendant one of movement: from pure language to languages, from languages back to pure language and from voice to language. Language is in constant flux, forever moving and changing, never static. But this movement must be characterized and qualified in that it is, and must be understood, as a movement in language by language. Expressions such as the Italian "non mi viene la parola" ("this word does not come to me") partake of language dynamism but simultaneously misunderstand the implication of the movement in question. The movement implied by "non mi viene la parola" is from language to subjectivity. Where should the word come from? Is the word supposed to come as we summon it? Moreover, assuming that the word travels, how long does it travel? Does it arrive safely and unchanged? The traveling invoked by the expression "non mi viene la parola" subsumes an origin and a point of departure in which the word is generated or where the word resides and waits for a call. This simple expression, so common in ordinary parlance, tells an important tale about the movement of language and also about language's original home. It implicitly says that language leaves its home in order to reach a destination which is also its situatedness in the world of communication, comprehension and utterability. And the story is told as if language can only exist thanks to the subject that utters it. The before of utterance is pure linguistic potentiality. "Non mi viene la parola" appears to indicate a separation between an elemental but silent language and its embodiment as uttered language. What does happen to language as it travels? Does it change? In other words, is the language at the origin, the potential and silent language, different from the uttered language of actuality and if so, how do they differ? Clearly, this is the difference between voice and language on the one hand and pure language and languages on the other. In either case the answer to the question "how does language change" cannot be answered since the origin, be it the voice or pure language, remains undisclosed. The question cannot be answered in and by language but it can apparently be answered at the moment when subjectivity becomes the prime reason of the change. Language changes as it is spoken by the subject. As such the actuality of language is nothing other than the subject itself. It is on this simple axiom that Saussure could articulate the difference between *langue* and *parole*.

If it is true that there is an origin of language and if it is true that the origin of language is other to the uttered experience of language, then the origin is irreparably lost and unreachable. Unless, of course, one wishes to locate that origin in the unconscious and spiritual domain of subjectivity and postulate the existence of an unconscious and spiritual language as well as an unconscious and spiritual being separate from the actual and present being. Here the conflation between subjectivity and language is perfect; a conflation that appears to confirm the history of language, subjectivity and knowledge. If this were the case the expression "non mi viene la parola" would mean nothing more than "my unconscious self is not coming to my conscious self, bringing forward

the unconscious and potential language that is stored away for my own use." But if this were the case, how would it be possible for an unconscious language to be called into existence and actuality at any given moment? The existence of language in the realm of utterance and its situatedness in actuality denies the representation and interpretation of the origin of language as the locus of the spiritual and the unconscious. The surreal, the "unconscious," the magic language is not the one that appears, uncontaminated and pure, straight out of its original home, it is not the origin. Rather, it is a word and a language that arrive on the plain of presentability via a different route than ordinary language.

As a matter of fact, the challenge is not really that of retracing the irretrievable origin, but rather that of investigating the nature and the reason for those instances in which language, by defying its own nature of fluidity, does not move, does not come, "non mi viene la parola," does not seem to travel? What kind of language is a language that "non viene"? There exists the possibility that this question is incorrectly formulated together with the investigative perspective from which it derives. Indeed, it would be plausible to postulate the immobility of subjectivity before language rather than the other way round. In this case it is the subject that does not travel towards language, and finds itself stuck in the absence of language. This is the land devoid of language, of grammar, where there are only sounds and voices. It is at these utterly embarrassing moments of aphasia that the subject is plunged into a strange, uncanny and surprising dimension, and where subjectivity experiences the abandonment of language. These are usually moments, a matter of seconds, after which the ban from language is resolved. And yet the ban from language can last longer and can drag the subject into madness or mental and social exile. But if it is true that it is the subject that moves, it is also true that the abandonment of language is a self-imposed exile, it is a ban that the subject forces upon itself. It is not language that moves away from the subject but the subject that moves away from language. Assuming that language does not move, language is then without origin and without difference. It follows that the traveling of language is only apparent and induced by the continuous traveling of subjectivity. It is like when we are on a stationary train believing that it moves whereas only the train next to us moves. It is a deception, an optical trick. The distinction between *langue* and *parole* is the result of such trick and should be restated as the distinction between the subject in language and the subject outside language. It is in this sense that the expression "non mi viene la parola" ought to be changed to "non vengo alla parola" ("I do not go to the word").

In Heidegger's *On the Way to Language* we read: "To undergo an experience with language ... means to let ourselves be properly concerned by the claim of language by entering into and submitting to it" (57). Yet in the same text, although in a different chapter, we also read: "We, accordingly, listen to language in this way, that we let it say its Saying to us. No matter in what way we may listen besides, whenever we are listening to something we are *letting something be said to us*, and all perception and conception is already contained in that act? We let its [language's] soundless voice come to us, and then demand, reach out and call for the sound that is already kept in store for us" (124). In Heidegger's intense and powerful, poetic and emotional, methodologically creative reflection on language, language comes and goes from and to the subject and the subject comes and goes from and to language. Language and subjectivity simultaneously move in search of one other and simultaneously stop in their footsteps to hear the proximity of the other. One's own silence is the other's voice and one's own absence is the other's presence. We can only hear language if we stop speaking language, only if we cease to "merely follow[s] language constantly" (*On the Way to Language* 75). It is at these moments of pure self-silencing and linguistic abandonment that the essence of language can be heard in that whenever "we speak a language, language itself never has the floor" and "Language speaks itself as language ... when we cannot find the word for something that concerns us" (*On the Way to Language* 59). The only chance we have to find language is to listen for it by shutting ourselves out of its continuous happening, by stopping and letting language come to us. And yet language cannot find us unless it too holds back in what Heidegger calls the "ringing stillness" (*On the Way to Language* 108), that is a state of pure immobility where only the existence of an undecipherable breath can lead us to language. Language comes to us only at the moment in which we move towards it in the experience of a

suspended subjectivity which denies itself in order to find itself. There is a game children love particularly and have played with exceeding enthusiasm and excitement from time immemorial. One player is blindfolded, made to turn around a few times, and then spurred to catch the other players. It usually starts with great noise and fuss with the blindfolded one falling about and crashing into all sorts of obstacles. In the noise of the play the blindfolded one cannot catch anybody, even risking injury in a useless and futile attempt to find the others participating as if it could actually see and run around at ease. The game takes a turn for the better only when the blindfolded one realizes that he cannot actually see and that his only chance of finding anybody rests on the acceptance of his blindness. Blindness is quickly followed by immobility which also means divesting oneself, although temporally, of life. The blindfolded one stops breathing, stops calling, stops moving. He stops being. As a magical response to this denial of the self, the other players go silent and stand still and yet they can still see, and it is this seeing that betrays them in that their being alive is soon manifested through breaths and tiny sounds. These sounds will give them away and allow the blindfolded one to catch them. But in fact, what the blindfolded one is seeking in those infinitesimal moments of non-existence is precisely the reconnection with existence and the re-entrance to his own being which can only be achieved by the catching of another being. He can only be himself again if called by the movement of the other. It is in stillness that movement takes place and that language catches fire. This simple children's game is the best entrance into Heidegger's reflection on language and helps explain the otherwise obscure statement that "we hear Saying only because we belong within it" (*On the Way to Language* 124). We can only catch somebody else because we are that somebody else. And we hear language because we are in language, because we are language. "Non mi viene la parola," "non vengo alla parola"; the negative state of not going can only be resolved by stopping all movements, both of language and subjectivity, by suspending and waiting, by ridding "ourselves of the habit of always hearing only what we already understand" (*On the Way to Language* 58). Can the process of translation be one of those instances in which "language speaks itself as language"? In other words, can translating be the moment when language stays still in order to reach out, in order to become and in order to meet and be met by subjectivity?

Note: The above article is an excerpt from Paolo Bartoloni, *About the Cultures of Exile, Writing, and Translation*. Purdue Books in Comparative Cultural Studies 14 <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/>>. West Lafayette: Purdue University Press <<http://www.thepress.purdue.edu/Comparativeculturalstudies.html>>, 2006. ca. 300 pages, bibliography, index. The hypothesis of the book is based on the belief that a substantial and innovative discussion of the philosophical notions of immanence and potentiality is not only overdue but also necessary to address the social, political, cultural, and ethical aporia confronting us today. The phenomenon of globalization with its countless sub-narratives such as mobility, migration, security, authenticity, and inauthenticity can be thought and contextualized through a close reading and articulation of immanence and potentiality. The author's aim is threefold: 1) to provide a tangible and workable philosophical and cultural discourse within which to present an alternative understanding of subjectivity. This will be achieved by engaging in a theoretical discussion with the philosophical discourse on potentiality and immanence, of which the writings of Gilles Deleuze and Giorgio Agamben are among the most advanced and innovative examples to date, 2) to provide a virtual insight into the potential immanent subject and community through presenting a radically new interpretation of exile, translation, and temporality, and 3) to show how the experience of potentiality and immanence, and their ontological status have been explored and realized in literature through a close reading and articulation of a series of selected texts, especially works by Giorgio Caproni and Maurice Blanchot. The methodology of the study is interdisciplinary, ranging across literary theory, postmodern cultural analysis, hermeneutics, and comparative culture analysis.

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