

RICŒUR AND THE PARIS SCHOOL: AN IMAGINARY ENCOUNTER ON THE NOTION OF INTERPRETATION

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Danica Seleskovitch and Marianne Lederer, the translation scholars of the Paris School who invented the Interpretive Theory of Translation (ITT), were intrigued by the use of the same notion of interpretation in hermeneutics, especially that by Paul Ricœur. Unfortunately, although an invitation was extended by the Paris School, an encounter between the two parties never came to fruition during Ricœur's lifetime. In this paper, we attempt to imagine this unfulfilled encounter between Ricœur and the Paris School, and reflect on the convergence and divergence of their views on interpretation as applied in hermeneutics and Translation Studies. This paper shows the shared convictions and divergence between Ricœur and the Paris School, and focuses in particular on their opposing stands through several keywords: the object of interpretation, the scope of interpretation, ambiguity, communicator versus interpreter, and the hermeneutical circle. Finally, this paper attempts to situate the ITT within the history of hermeneutics.

Keywords: Ricœur – Interpretation – ITT (Interpretive Theory of Translation) – Hermeneutic circle – Ambiguity – World – World knowledge

I. An unfulfilled encounter between Ricœur and the Paris School

Our study begins with a paper written by the French translation philosopher Jean-René Ladmira, in honour of his doctoral supervisor, Paul Ricœur. In the paper, Ladmira describes an unfulfilled encounter between Ricœur and the researchers from the *Ecole Supérieure d'Interprètes et de Traducteurs* (ESIT), the place of origin of the Interpretive Theory of Translation (ITT). Ladmira reports that the then-dean of ESIT, Fortunato Israël, invited Ricœur to be the keynote speaker at a conference titled *Le sens en traduction*, which was held on the 2nd and 3rd of June, 2005.² Ricœur could not accept the invitation because of his health, and his death on the 20th of May eliminated an important opportunity for face-to-face dialogue between Ricœur and Paris School scholars. But in

¹ This work is supported by Hankuk University of Foreign Studies Research Fund of 2015.

² Ladmira, J.-R., "L'empire des sens," in *Le sens en traduction*, ed. M. Lederer, Paris: Lettres modernes minard, 2006, p. 109.

2009, Lederer, in her book *Traduction et Herméneutique*, tries to find answers to the questions she would have asked if the encounter had happened, attempting in her own way to reconcile Translation Studies and hermeneutics.

In this paper, we hope to further imagine the dialogue that they might have enjoyed at that time, and afterwards.

The ITT was advanced by Danica Seleskovitch and Marianne Lederer, scholars of the ESIT, sometimes referred to as the Paris School. Developed throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the ITT is the first systematic theory to explain the acts of interpreting and translating, not as the transcoding of languages, but as interpretive process at the textual level. One can only wonder what the Paris School hoped to accomplish by inviting Ricœur to their conference. Whereas the Paris School based their research on observations of the work of simultaneous interpreters,³ Ricœur delved into the interpretation of multiple meanings within ancient texts handed down through the ages. What conversations would the two parties have exchanged? Would their views have converged at some point? At exactly what point would that have happened?

To answer these questions, we focus throughout this paper on the following three topics. First, we briefly consider the commonalities between Ricœur and the Paris School. Second, we discuss the differences between the two schools of thought. Finally, we seek to locate the ITT within the history of hermeneutics.

II. Shared convictions as the starting point between Ricœur and the Paris School

Contrary to what many think, Ricœur and the Paris School theorists shared several views. At a basic level, they were both severely critical of Saussure's structural linguistics.

Linguists who worked in the tradition of structural linguistics viewed the notion of *langue* as the very essence of language. However, Ricœur argued that Saussure's notion of *langue* failed to adequately account for the speaking subject, the listener or reader, the meaning, and the referent. According to Ricœur, this failure resulted in an inability of structural linguistics to address the question of the core function of language (i.e., "Who is saying something about something to someone?").⁴ In an attempt to move beyond structuralism, Ricœur proposed instead "discourse" and "the world of the text", in a critical stance that he solidified in the 1970s and 1980s.

The Paris School also put forth the criticism that structural linguistics, and traditional linguistics in general, could not properly explain the practices of interpretation and

³ To avoid confusion regarding the term "interpreter", this study will refer to both oral translators and text translators as "translators". Depending on the context, the former will be referred to as a "translator of speeches", and the person, who interprets, in a hermeneutical sense, will be referred to as "the reader", or in some cases, "the interpreter".

⁴ Ricœur, P., "Structure, Word, Event", in *The Conflict of Interpretations: An Essay in Hermeneutics*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974, pp. 79-96; "Signe et sens", in *Encyclopedia Universalis*, Paris: Encyclopedia Universalis, 1972, pp. 1073 – 1079.

translation. Before the advent of the ITT, it was common to view interpretation and translation merely as subcategories of interlingual communication. Consequently, interpretation and translation were addressed only indirectly, if at all – specifically, in comparative linguistics and applied linguistics. Lederer rejected the view that interpretation and translation occur at the level of *langue*, and instead emphasised that interpretation and translation occur at the textual level. According to her, the structural linguistics spearheaded by Saussure neglected *parole*, but the ITT “establishes a basic difference between the linguistic meaning of words or sentences and the sense they point to in a text”.⁵

In addition to the critical position against structural linguistics, Ricœur and the Paris School shared more common ground: both held that the meaning of a text is not intrinsic to the text.

Ricœur used this eventual common ground to explain why we often encounter problems of misunderstanding. According to Ricœur, we require hermeneutics to guard against the misunderstanding of texts.⁶ This line of reasoning evokes Gadamer’s thought that “interpretation is necessary when the meaning of a text cannot be immediately understood”.⁷

The members of the Paris School also held the same view. They further argued that the meaning of a text is extracted from the original text, through the cognitive work of an interpreter or a translator.⁸ It was to explain the cognitive process of extracting meaning that the Paris School proposed the innovative concept of deverbalisation, a mediating stage between the comprehension of the original text, and its (re)expression.

It is thus fair to say that although their theoretical backgrounds were different, Ricœur and the Paris School both emphasised the roles of readers or interpreters, in the extraction of the non-freely given meaning of a text.

III. Divergence between Ricœur and the Paris School

It goes beyond our purpose of this study to provide an overall comparative analysis between ITT and Ricœurian hermeneutics. We have chosen a number of shared concepts in more or less arbitrary manner, and seek to identify various points of divergence between the two schools of thought.

3. 1. The object of interpretation: speech vs text

The ITT began as a theory applicable to consecutive and simultaneous interpretation. Its scope soon expanded through the work of Israël and others, and the ITT claimed to be

⁵ Lederer, M., *La traduction aujourd’hui: le modèle intrépreteif*, Paris, Hachette, 1994, p. 88.

⁶ Ricœur, *The Conflict of Interpretations: An Essay in Hermeneutics*, p. 17.

⁷ Gadamer, H.-G., *Truth and Method*, trans. Garret Barden and John Cumming, New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1982, p. 301.

⁸ Lederer, *Translation: The Interpretive Model*, p. 228.

a general theory that could also be applied to written translation (both pragmatic and literary translation) by the 1990s.⁹ Nonetheless, no explicit attempts were made within the ITT to reference traditional hermeneutics.

This lack of interest was also apparent on Ricœur's part. In a published collection of Ricœur's essays in which he discusses translation,¹⁰ not a single reference to the Paris School or the ITT can be found.

It behoves us to ask why this apparent indifference between the ITT and Ricœur existed. The answer to this question seems to hinge on the fact that they diverge on the issue of the object of interpretation.

The Paris School scholars viewed the practice of interpretation mainly as the cognitive work of interpreters in simultaneous interpretation booths, or as the work of translators of highly technical documents. For them, the practice of interpretation required an effort (1) to spontaneously capture the univocal and unambiguous meaning of spoken and written texts, and (2) to communicate the captured meaning in another language. Ricœur, on the other hand, viewed the practice of interpretation as pertaining to the act of uncovering the double or multiple meanings of symbols in texts, and revealing the world of the text.

It is worth emphasising the difference between these perspectives, a difference that becomes very obvious when we compare the two schools' explanations of spoken words and of written words.

Seleskovitch, an experienced simultaneous interpreter, quotes a Latin proverb, *verba volant, scripta manent*,¹¹ to draw attention to the evanescence of spoken words. Seleskovitch does not consider this evanescence as a bad thing. She says, "Although the speaker's *wording* may be evanescent, his *meaning* is not and is reproduced completely intact".¹² This evanescence of spoken words makes it important for an interpreter to immediately capture¹³ the meaning of a speech.

If the Paris School was more interested in spoken words, Ricœur's attention was clearly focused on written discourse. This is apparent in the four concepts that Ricœur used to explain the specific features of written discourse:¹⁴

(1) Fixation. Because spoken words are not fixed by letters, they are threatened by time. That is, they lack the persistence and continuity of written words, ending in their spontaneous disappearance.¹⁵

⁹ Israël, F., "Traduction littéraire et théorie du sens", in *Etudes traductologiques*, ed. M. Lederer, Paris: Minard, 1990, pp. 29–43.

¹⁰ Ricœur, P., *Sur la traduction*, Paris: Bayard, 2004 ; Trans. Eileen Brennan, *On Translation*, New York: Routledge, 2006.

¹¹ Seleskovitch, D., *Interpreting for International Conferences*, trans. Stephanie Dailey & Eric Norman McMillan, Washington: Pen and Booth, 1994, p. 17.

¹² Idem.

¹³ Ibid., pp. 36–37.

¹⁴ Ricœur, P., *Herméneutique. Cours professé à l'Institut Supérieur de Philosophie 1971–1972*, Louvain-la-Neuve: Editions du SIC, 1971, pp. 25–32.

(2) Independence from the writer's intentions. In the case of spoken words, the speaker and the audience are in general co-present, occupying the same space. This is why "what the speaker means" corresponds generally to "what his discourse means".¹⁶ When and if the two differ, the difference can generally be verified and corrected on the spot. However, in the case of written words, the author and the reader are typically not co-present. "The mental intention of the author", as a result, may be vastly different from "the verbal meaning of the text".

(3) Non-Ostensivity. Matters referred to by spoken words are spatially-temporally ostensive within the discourse. However, matters referred to by written words are oftentimes implicit and immaterial. This implicit and non-ostensive nature of things that is referenced by the written word provided fertile ground upon which Ricœur was able to propose the concept of "the world of the text".

(4) Potentiality of the recipient. The recipient of spoken words exists directly before the speaker, whereas the recipient of written words exists in potentiality. Thus, the meaning of written words is open to anyone who can, and cares to, read them.

If the Paris School was more interested in the cognitive work of interpreters and translators, Ricœur appears to have believed that spoken words do not raise hermeneutic questions. Can we take Ricœur's view, extrapolate it, and claim that hermeneutical questions can be raised only for the translation of written texts?

The Paris School does not directly address these questions. However, they often claimed that the translation of written texts and the interpreting of speeches adhered to the same process,¹⁷ even while they acknowledged the difference between spoken words and written words. This viewpoint explains why and how the ITT, which began as a theory of oral interpretation, was expanded to encompass the act of translating written texts.

3.2. The scope of interpretation: sense vs exegesis

The Paris School theorists believed that the core of the interpretive process is the extraction of meaning from evanescent words. What is the difference between the meaning extracted from an original through the work of the interpreter, and the "author's intentions"? We shall examine Seleskovitch and Lederer's notion of meaning, or "sense", according to the ITT.

The sense of a sentence is what an author deliberately wants to communicate; it is neither the reason why he is expressing himself nor the consequences of what he is saying. Sense should not be confused with either motive or intention. The translator who

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 26.

¹⁶ Ricœur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning*, Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1976, p. 29.

¹⁷ Lederer, *Translation: The Interpretive Model*, p. 9.

explains or the interpreter who comments would be transgressing the boundaries of their function.¹⁸

Seleskovitch and Lederer's recommendation that we should not confuse the sense of a text with the motive or intention of the author seems to be analogous to Ricœur's belief that there is a fundamental distinction to be made between the author's intentions, and "what the discourse means"¹⁹ – or, borrowing from Emile Benveniste, the "instance of discourse".²⁰ For Ricœur, the instance of discourse, which can be isolated from the author's intentions and his/her unique ways of expressing them, is the only thing that is "eminently translatable from one language to another".²¹

Ricœur and the Paris School both attempt to liberate words from the author's intentions, to de-psychologise the sense of words. In hermeneutical terms, Ricœur and the Paris School both maintained a critical distance from the romantic program of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics, which consisted of "understanding an author as well as, and even better than, he understands himself".²²

Ricœur's critical position is in keeping with the view heralded by Roland Barthes, and with that of Michel Foucault. Needless to say, this approach has been accepted as the standard view of the academic paradigm in our time.²³ The passage quoted above from Seleskovitch and Lederer can thus be understood within the same context.²⁴

Most intriguing in the passage quoted above is the last sentence, which reads, "The translator who explains or the interpreter who comments would be transgressing the boundaries of their function". The act of translation is clearly distinguished from the act of producing commentary or exegesis. The same point is further elucidated by the authors' later remark that "the translator interprets the text but does not interpret its sense".²⁵ The Paris School's unequivocal view, that to comment on or explain texts is to transgress the

¹⁸ Seleskovitch D. & Lederer, M., *Interpréter pour traduire*, Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne Didier Erudition, 1986, p. 269. This book was published in French and was not translated into English. Fortunately, this section was translated and produced in the English translation of *La traduction aujourd'hui: le modèle interprétatif* (Lederer, *Translation: The Interpretive Model*, p. 16).

¹⁹ Ricœur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning*, p. 29.

²⁰ Ricœur, "Signe et sens," op. cit., p. 1077; *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning*, op. cit., p. 9; *Herméneutique*, op. cit., p. 34.

²¹ Ricœur, *Herméneutique*, op. cit., p. 34.

²² Quoted from Ricœur, *From Text to Action*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and John B. Thompson, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1991, p. 56. Cf. F. Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutik*, ed. H. Kimmerle, Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1959, p. 56.

²³ Some scholars, such as E. D. Hirsh, emphasised the author's intentions, even in the post-Schleiermacher era. Hirsh, E. D., *The Aims of Interpretation*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1976, p. 90.

²⁴ Lederer, M., "Le sens dessus dessous", in *Übersetzung und Hermeneutik, Traduction et herméneutique*, ed. Larisa Cercel, Romania: Zetabooks, 2009, p. 282.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 269.

boundaries, differs radically from the position of Ricœur, which eagerly strives towards the exegesis of texts and their multiple interpretations.

Such differences, however, did not force Lederer to deny the existence of ambiguity. Indeed, this is the very reason why the Paris School emphasised the need for “world knowledge” for interpreters and translators.²⁶

3.3. Ambiguity: ‘cognitive’ vs ‘intentional’

What is an interpreter or a translator to do, if a text ambiguously oscillates between double or multiple meanings? To answer this question, it is important to understand Ricœur’s and the Paris School’s respective views on situations that involve ambiguity, and therefore require interpretation.

The Paris School offers several reasons as to why an original text or a speech might be ambiguous. Either the author of the original text must have been unclear, failed to communicate properly, or made the mistake of not recognising existing ambiguity at the level of *langue*; or the ambiguity must have arisen from a lack of knowledge on the part of the reader.²⁷ What does it mean to say that an ambiguity arises from a lack of “cognitive input” on the part of the reader? Lederer says that “sense is a synthesis of linguistic meanings and their relevant cognitive inputs”,²⁸ and defines “relevant cognitive inputs” as the “relevant notional and emotional elements from world knowledge and contextual knowledge”.²⁹ Thus, the interpreter’s or the reader’s insufficient knowledge of the world and/or of the text’s context could explain cases in which the interpreter or reader cannot spontaneously capture the author’s message. According to the Paris School, should the missing but necessary knowledge be acquired, the ambiguity in the original text or speech could then be resolved.

If the Paris School shies away from delving too deeply into the phenomena of ambiguity, Ricœur is deeply immersed in this problem, specifically in the problem of “intentional ambiguity”. Intentional ambiguity must be distinguished from communication mishaps, which arise due to mistakes made by the author or the speaker, and/or due to the *pathologie du discours*.³⁰ Ambiguity of the intended kind is sought, pursued, and calculated by the author.³¹ The richness in meaning afforded by intentional ambiguity generates room for open interpretations, not just for the first reader, but for all readers.³²

It is thus natural for Ricœur to be interested in the problem of symbols, as their meaning shifts through time and place. He considers the symbol “a double-meaning linguistic expression that requires an interpretation, and interpretation is a work of

²⁶ Lederer, *Translation: The Interpretive Model*, p. 223.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 228.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 223.

³⁰ Ricœur, *Herméneutique*, p. 63.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 226.

understanding that aims at deciphering symbols”.³³ For Ricœur, a symbol has not only “a primary, literal, manifest meaning”, but also other secondary, non-literal, non-direct meanings. These manifold meanings appear in a diverse number of fields, ranging from religion and literature, to psychoanalysis.³⁴ A symbol supports intentional, calculated ambiguity and richness in meaning. It also supports a particular era and culture, and reveals something about a “world”. As such, Ricœur regards symbols and metaphors as a serious area for exploration.

Despite the conflicting positions of the two schools of thought with respect to ambiguity, the Paris School and Ricœur share the view that the process of finding “meaning” has much to do with the “world” and/or “world knowledge”.

It is notable that the Paris School leaves the notion of world knowledge quite vague. Indeed, Lederer provides a limited explanation just specifying that world knowledge encompasses an individual’s life experience, language, and reasoning.³⁵ Thus, this notion of world knowledge remains nebulous, in that it refers to all types of knowledge acquired throughout the reader’s experience and reading.

From hermeneutical tradition, we gain a more detailed account of this “world”. Speaking in Heideggerian terms, this “world” is the fulfilment of a hermeneutical “as”,³⁶ as well as a realm that permits its manifestation *à la* Heidegger. The “world” is, again *à la* Gadamer, a realm of tradition³⁷ that addresses us. It serves as the basis for meaning; the world can generate double or multiple meanings. In the conclusion of *The Symbolism of Evil*, Ricœur affirms that “the symbol gives rise to thought”, and “the being of the world”³⁸ serves as the basis of “the situation of the being of man”, especially that of the “fallible man”. Ricœur later proposes the concept of “cultural groups”,³⁹ which constitutes the main framework for the formation of meaning, in addition to the concept of “world”.

So, then, why did the ITT theorists limit their interpretation to the daily, technical, and practical levels, even when they considered the marriage between world knowledge and contextual knowledge to be the core factor of meaning’s construction? Avoiding the problem of ambiguity, the Paris School is denying the clear possibility of “[meaning] something other than what is said”.⁴⁰ Even in 2009, Lederer continued to maintain that although the range of meanings may change according to the genre of the text, the

³³ Ricœur, *Herméneutique*, p. 63.

³⁴ Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, trans. Denis Savage, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970, p. 13-14.

³⁵ Lederer, *Translation: The Interpretive Model*, p. 231.

³⁶ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996, p. 148.

³⁷ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 251.

³⁸ Ricœur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1967, p. 356.

³⁹ Ricœur, *On Translation*, p. 31.

⁴⁰ Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*, p. 12.

interpretive process is the same, regardless of genre.⁴¹ But if the genre of the text can influence the range of meaning, would it not then be advisable to expand the scope of the traditional notion of interpretation? Would it not be appropriate for the Paris School to encompass the “interpretation that reveals the world of the text”?

3.4. Communicator vs Interpreter

While, as Ricœurian hermeneutics would have it, a reader reveals his or her identity through new interpretations of texts, according to the Paris School, a translator performs the intermediary task of “a creative activity by having recourse to pre-existing linguistic and non-linguistic knowledge to produce new sense”.⁴² Lederer’s quote from Umberto Eco, “A text wants someone to help it function”,⁴³ emphasises that a text should not be seen as a machine that is capable of revealing its meaning all on its own. The “someone” to whom Eco refers in the above quotation is “the reader”. For Lederer, of course, this “someone” undoubtedly refers to the translator.

It is clear that a translator must intervene for an “immediate grasp of sense” in both spoken and written discourses. What does it mean for a translator to intervene? Seleskovitch answers this question, drawing a diverse set of metaphors. The role of a translator is to eliminate “the language barrier”, akin to the role of “the intermediaries” arranged “to overcome the acoustical barrier” between the people in conversation who are seemingly divided by “a soundproof glass wall” within a room. Seleskovitch also compares the role of the translator to that of “the sports caster who describes for his listeners the action that is unfolding before his very eyes”, to that of “a bridge” between two different languages.⁴⁴

Seleskovitch considers interpreters and translators to be entities who perform a positive role, by overcoming barriers in communication. Nonetheless, she readily admits that a well-communicated “message” is “the creation of two people, not one”.⁴⁵ In other words, the successful communication of a message is a task performed by a translator and speaker together. Even so, Seleskovitch clearly limits the scope of the translator’s intervention: A translator must not “replace something the speaker said with his own ideas or thoughts on the subject”.⁴⁶ If he or she does, according to Seleskovitch, the translator is “over-involved”.⁴⁷ This view accords well with her criticism of translators who comment, or provide exegesis.

As far as translation of technical texts is concerned, we may accept a limited role for translators as communicators. These types of communicative activities, which consist of the accumulation of information and knowledge, followed by transmission of it through

⁴¹ Lederer, “Le sens dessus dessous”, p. 271.

⁴² Lederer, *Translation: The Interpretive Model*, p. 96.

⁴³ Idem.

⁴⁴ Seleskovitch, *Interpreting for International Conferences*, p. 1; pp. 4-7; p. 54; pp. 98-99.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 99.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 54.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 98.

the effort of the translator, require no reflection on the relationship between the text and the translator. That is, the translator does not need to reflect on his or her self-awareness or self-understanding as being-in-the-world.

But what is it about texts that open up an experience of the world? For Ricœur, such texts shock and alter the reader's self-awareness, and relationship with him- or herself. This point is precisely what the Paris School fails to address, or intentionally avoids. When Ricœur says that "the symbol gives rise to thought", this "thought" is not a simple outcome of the sum of world knowledge and contextual knowledge, as described by Lederer. Instead, "thought" indicates a novel way of thinking or being that is held by an individual who understands the symbols. It indicates a reflection about oneself, within the world that the individual has been invited to consider, by his or her way of understanding the symbols. The state of "self-understanding in front of the work"⁴⁸ described by Ricœur constitutes an understanding of a text by the reader, applying the text to his or her own situation.

3.5. The hermeneutic circle: 'cognitive' vs 'ontological' level

In a recent discussion on hermeneuticians who have addressed translation, including Schleiermacher, Gadamer, Ricœur, Berman⁴⁹, and Eco,⁵⁰ Lederer's main criticisms are directed at Schleiermacher. Her remarks regarding Schleiermacher are quite convincing, in that the theoretical reflections by the father of modern hermeneutics contain certain anachronistic elements that are ill-suited to the reality of contemporary translation practices: Schleiermacher claimed on the one hand that the translation of spoken words is merely a mechanical activity, and on the other hand that the role of a hermeneutician is to understand the author better than the author understands himself or herself.⁵¹ Lederer argues that accepting such romantic assertions would fall into the realm of exegesis.⁵² This argument clearly demonstrates Lederer's efforts to differentiate between the act of hermeneutic interpretation, and the act of translation.

We should first note that Lederer quotes only from Schleiermacher's romantic program, overlooking the core content of his critical programme. Whereas Schleiermacher's romantic programme "appeals to the living relation with the process of creation", the critical programme "wishes to elaborate the universally valid rules of understanding".⁵³ This critical programme is remarkably summarised by the famous concept of the

⁴⁸ Ricœur, *From Text to Action*, p. 87. Cf. *Réflexion faite. Autobiographie intellectuelle*, Paris: Esprit, 1995, p. 57: "J'échange le moi, maître de lui-même, contre le soi, disciple du texte."

⁴⁹ Cf. Seong-Woo, YUN & Hyang LEE, "Antoine Berman's Philosophical Reflections on Language and Translation: The Possibility of Translating without Platonism", 2011, *Filozofia* 66(4), pp. 336-346 ; "Hermeneutic Turn in Antoine Berman's Philosophy of Translation: The Influence of Heidegger and Ricœur, 2013, *Filozofia* 68(3), pp. 205-219.

⁵⁰ Lederer, "Le sens dessus dessous", p. 282.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 272, 282.

⁵² Ibid., p. 282.

⁵³ Ricœur, *Herméneutique*, p. 71; *From Text to Action*, p. 56.

hermeneutic circle, a concept that we believe is unwittingly utilised by the Paris School, even though neither Lederer nor Seleskovitch ever mentions it. Lederer uses the concept of individual parts and the whole, in her explanation of each of the three steps of interpretation.

For comprehension, the first step of the interpretive process, Lederer explains that “Understanding is an achievement made of input from both linguistic and extra-linguistic knowledge”.⁵⁴ An organic combination of “linguistic and extra-linguistic knowledge”, as parts, leads to the understanding, which constitutes the whole.

For deverbalisation, the second step, Lederer puts forth an “immediate grasp of sense”. The “linguistic meanings and their own relevant cognitive inputs” correspond to the individual parts in the hermeneutic circle, and the sum of those parts, or their “synthesis”, creates the whole “sense”.

Reverbalisation, the last step of the interpretive process, involves the organic combination of meanings extracted in the previous two steps, comprehension and deverbalisation. In other words, if comprehension and deverbalisation are parts, then their combination in reverbalisation becomes the whole.

The Paris School seems to use the hermeneutic circle of Schleiermacher, limiting its scope to the cognitive and epistemic levels. Let us quote one of the paragraphs of Ricœur’s *On Translation*, used by Lederer in her argument:

...the work of the translator does not move from the word to the sentence, to the text, to the cultural group, but conversely: absorbing vast interpretation of the spirit of a culture, the translator comes down again from the text, to the sentences and to the word.⁵⁵

Lederer seems to agree with Ricœur, quoting this passage in which he explains “the cultural group as the entire culture, as a whole that goes beyond the text”. But although she does not exclude the ontological dimension of this process, and states that meaning is constructed from the whole text,⁵⁶ she understands interpretation only as the process of acquiring knowledge.

On the other hand, in the paragraph just before the quoted section, Ricœur states that “texts in turn are part of the cultural group through which different visions of the world are expressed”.⁵⁷ This provides the basis for our belief that the term “ensemble”, or a cultural group as a whole, refers to what Husserl called “the world of life”, wherein the translator, hermeneutician, or the reader accepts and/or expresses his or her worldview. This is the space into which the reader, interpreter, translator, and hermeneutician are thrown as Beings-in-the-world in Heideggerian terms. Because this is a world wherein the

⁵⁴ Lederer, *Translation: The Interpretive Model*, p. 3.

⁵⁵ Ricœur, *On Translation*, p. 31. As the English translated text is slightly influenced by the subjective interpretation of the translator, referring to the original French text is recommended: “La trace du traducteur ne va pas du mot à la phrase, au texte, à l’ensemble culturel, mais à l’inverse: s’imprégnant par de vastes lectures de l’esprit d’une culture, le traducteur redescend du texte, à la phrase, et au mot” (*Sur la traduction*, p. 56).

⁵⁶ Lederer, “Le sens dessus dessous”, p. 275.

⁵⁷ Ricœur, *On Translation*, p. 31.

translator has already “[moved] from ... to”, it is the space where the translator must “[come] down again”, to ultimately create “a glossary at the level of words”.⁵⁸ Consequently, the cultural group is not merely the object of knowledge or perception; it is the ontological condition or situation necessary for such knowledge.

IV. Another hermeneutic inversion?

Now, how can we situate the ITT in the history of hermeneutics?

Schleiermacher’s hermeneutics went beyond addressing the individual rules of theological and legal exegesis, bringing about a “general inversion”⁵⁹ that deemed the activity of comprehension itself to be the object of core interest in hermeneutics. Then Dilthey devoted his work to “the opposition between the *explanation* of nature and the *understanding* of history (*l’esprit*)”.⁶⁰ At the same time, Heidegger declared that understanding should not be equated with a “mode of knowledge”. Rather, according to him, understanding is the fundamental “mode of being” as a structure of *In-der-Welt-Sein*, thus leading to an “ontological inversion”. Ricœur was always interested in the epistemological dimension of interpretation, but later aligned himself with the ontological dimension too, and eventually advocated a methodical⁶¹ hermeneutics that reconciled the two dimensions. The history of hermeneutics has undergone these various inversions.

We view the ITT as having brought a kind of “pragmatic inversion” to the history of hermeneutics. The Paris School applied the concept of interpretation to pragmatic texts and speeches, an area intentionally neglected by the hermeneuticians. In this respect, the Paris School seems to have substantially supplemented the work of modern hermeneutics, which had previously only focused on legal, theological, religious, philosophical, and literary texts.

Is it possible to construct a comprehensive theory of interpretation that is applicable to all kinds of texts? This is perhaps a question that should be left until the day that the Paris School and hermeneuticians are capable of dialectically complementing one another, within a still larger hermeneutic circle. We hope that our research is a stepping stone to this eventual encounter.

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⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 32.

⁵⁹ Ricœur, *From Text to Action*, pp. 55-56.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 56. Ricœur’s emphasis.

⁶¹ Ricœur, “Langage (philosophies du)”, *Encyclopedia Universalis*, 1971, p. 444.

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