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**Anthony Pym (2012). *On Translator Ethics*. (H. Walker, Trans.)
Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, pp. 185, 80 €/ \$120.00.
ISBN: 978-90-272-7299-7**

After and during the “cultural turn” and, also, the “sociological turn” in Translation Studies, the issue of Translation Ethics has gradually gained a central position in the theoretical and practical (professional) arena. Beyond mere “codes of ethics” for the profession(s), the discipline has increasingly been calling for an intellectual debate on the topic. “On Translator Ethics” is a translation/re-write of the 1997 French original, which collects and reassesses a number of ethical stances posed by classic and contemporary theorists in the discipline. Both rigorous and playful, but also challenging to established notions, the work does not decline engaging those stances in a rather critical way.

Save for a number of skillfully woven cross-references and examples, it would not be difficult to read the first five chapters (out of a total of seven) as nearly stand-alone essays; the book is a “rework of a series of talks” (1). Headed by titles that recall categories to which translators are typically adscript to (“in-betweens”, “messengers,” “professionals,” “interveners,” “missionaries,” and “agents”) each chapter develops from the reading (or re-reading) of a previously existing theory or sets of theories, that are cross-checked with real-world, actual cases. Working from the general to the particular, and also inductively from specific cases, the work meanders through a number of topics and authors as a discursive strategy that allows the text to touch upon a variety of aspects from many different angles, resorting to Philosophy (from Aristotle to Kant, Hegel, Berman, Popper and Derrida, among others), Translation Theory (Schleiermacher, Nida, Newmark, Venuti, Vermeer, Spivak, Meschonnic, Baker, Spivak) and other subsidiary fields. However, this apparent “meandering” (in all honesty described in the *Introduction* as risking to get lost “itself in labyrinths”) is not devoid of a strong sense of purpose.

By using extreme exemplification and, in some cases, a strategy of *reductio ab absurdum*, Pym explores the shortcomings that well-known and established general translation theories present in terms of an ethics of translation. Thus, the author puts forward the idea of an ethics oriented towards the translator as opposed to a mere “ethics of professional translators” (81). He also embraces the original appellation that Schleiermacher assigns to professional translators *Blendlinge* (21-24) a sort of “bastards,” “métisse,” and “in-betweens” as a bold denomination that is taken as nothing but praise in itself.

The book incorporates explicit “update” sections and footnotes in each chapter, but it also directly interjects the original text with specific mentions of recent technological and social developments in the profession and the discipline which were nonexistent or barely hinted at at the time when the French original was published: from the eruption of social networks to globalisation, crowd sourcing,

machine translation, collaborative localisation strategies and even the growth of the academic field itself, the work elegantly incorporates current issues that call for a reassessment of the existing ethical discourse, either too abstract, too simplistic or too essentialist.

It may be worth signaling that the book itself is the product of a process very much parallel to the changes it describes in the social and professional paradigms of the discipline. Not just a “translation” of a source text, but a re-write, the very same title is subject to an interesting shift: from the militant original title “**Pour** une éthique du traducteur”, the English edition chooses a more distanced --perhaps also encompassing-- “on” as the opening preposition: “**On** Translator Ethics.” This is probably a more appropriate heading for a book that does precisely that: reflect on what has been said and written, deconstruct it, and then, savaging a number of concepts, steadfastly proceed towards the construction of a novel proposal. Based on a strong sense of interculturality, cooperation and effort, this proposal posits the question “Should I translate?” as the central matter affecting any translator ethics, from which additional considerations concerning responsibilities, consequences, efforts, costs and trust will ensue (166-167).

It may not be completely surprising to find that this proposal, very much articulated by “an economy of efforts,” resounds with notions that had been entertained and successfully applied to the field in the early and midnineties (roughly, around the time the French original was being written): Gutt’s application of relevance theory and its “processing efforts” to Translation Studies, or Gile’s theory of efforts applied to interpreting and interpreters’ training. It is nevertheless slightly disappointing that this interesting articulation of the ethics proposed comes only towards the end of the book and, perhaps paradoxically, under the name of “principles” listed in the very last two pages of the book (afterword excluded). While the underlying discursive strategy is both legitimate and enticing, a further elaboration of those five “final principles” would have been most welcome, so would have their subsequent cross-checking against the very same examples and cases that had been raised throughout the book.

Thought provoking and, also, to some extent provocative, this is a book both challenging and appealing. Erudite in its resorting to a myriad of historical and contemporary situations, classical and contemporary Western Philosophy and Translation Theory, the book is nonetheless also direct, dynamic and entertaining; an inviting reading for scholars and researchers interested in a rigorous exploration of Ethics in the discipline and the profession.

Josep Dávila, University of Texas Brownsville, USA.

E-mail: davila.josep@gmail.com