

Federici, E. (2022). The Koskinen, Kaisa and Pokorn, Nike (eds). Routledge Handbook of Translation and Ethics. *The Journal of Specialised Translation*, 38, 365-369.

<https://doi.org/10.26034/cm.jostrans.2022.098>

This article is publish under a *Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International* (CC BY):

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>



© Eleonora Federici, 2022

Koskinen, Kaisa and Pokorn, Nike (eds) (2021). *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Ethics*. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 508. £152 (print), £31.99 (e-book). ISBN 9780815358237 (print), ISBN 9781003127970 (e-book).

Ethics has always been at the centre of translation and translators' work as it is it foreseeable and appropriate, but this volume offers a broader and more comprehensive panorama on this challenging and controversial issue. As the editors affirm, "ethics is indeed a perennial question of translation, both in written or spoken form" (Koskinen and Pokorn 2021:1)—i.e., it is indisputable that translators and interpreters are linguistic and cultural mediators caught in a net of a thousand questions and dilemmas over their translation practices and their responsibility as cultural agents. However, if introduced in the wide realm of translation theories and practices, the term "ethics" itself needs further explanation, as the wealth of recent publications on this topic also confirms (Berman and Wood 2005; Baker and Maier 2011; Pym 2012). It is not by chance that the editors outline how a tripartite division on normative ethics, applied ethics and metaethics can be retraced in Translation Studies through a diachronic perspective which helps to shed light on the attention that has been paid over time to different issues such as which translatorial practices should be adopted, which translation theories help to deal with ethical questions and how, which translation strategies and tools can be useful in order to solve practical translation problems from one language to another keeping in mind the essence of the text and, last but not least, to which point a translator/interpreter is or needs to be aware of his/her ethical responsibilities. From these premises, it is clear that a discussion on ethics in Translation Studies and practices crosses many boundaries, encompasses many professional guidelines and forces us to reflect on the social role of the translator/interpreter and his/her deontology. My own considerations go around two main questions: to what degree are we ethically bound as scholars, translators and interpreters when dealing with a text? And how can we be guided in the host of dilemmas to strike a balance between what we think is a good linguistic choice and a wider reflection on what should be absolutely transferred and/or taken into account in the target context? It would be tempting to answer these questions just relying on common sense and practical competences but translation is not only about a text but it is also about the translator's mind and feelings, that is to say how he/she interprets the text in a particular situation from a particular, unique perspective. As a matter of fact, and to put it in Aristotelian terms (Aristotle 2000[1994]), as cultural mediators we enact a particular combination of ethos, pathos and logos. That means that our authority as agents of linguistic/cultural mediations appeals to logic, emotions and reason. In fact, the way these three categories are combined in our work becomes visible through our choices in the translation of a text. It also means that our competences go hand in hand not only with our knowledge on subjects, topics and workings of specific domains but also with our moral capability as professionals in cross-cultural communication.

This rich and challenging volume provides answers to the two main above-mentioned questions making us understand that “Translation Studies as a discipline is attuned to cultural differences” (5). In their “Introduction” the editors assert that we need to be cultural bridge — builders for a plurality of voices and geographical, social, political and cultural positions — a statement in line with recent calls to overcome Eurocentrist bias in the discipline (van Doorslaer and Flynn 2013). They also emphasise that we need to reflect on the fact that we are educators and trainers for our communities. All these issues are clearly analysed in the different sections of the book, which is divided into four parts with the aim of putting together a wide range of positions regarding translation and ethics, and of offering a global and comprehensive view of various theoretical, methodological and professional landscapes.

Part 1 is structured around the development of ethical thoughts in Translation Studies beyond the Western frame of reference and combines different theoretical perspectives. After Andrew Chesterman’s introduction on the translator’s role as a producer of knowledge, the volume opens to a panoramic discussion on translation ethics in the Chinese tradition by Xin Guangqin which gives new insights for a rethinking of major issues such as fidelity, responsibility, the convergence of ethics and politics, and the new challenges posed by interpreters and translators’ professional spheres, to which the chapters by Baer and Schäffner, Hebenstreit, Massardier-Kenney, Pokorn and Koskinen, Laaksonen and Koskinen, and Pym also contribute. Two chapters of Part 1 (by Robinson and Ergun) are dedicated to postcolonial and feminist translation theories, which are undoubtedly central methodologies in the ongoing re-discussion of ethical issues in the translator’s work, his/her role as mediator and the political and ideological positioning behind translation choices. Thanks to these perspectives, Translation Studies have hosted renewed debates on notions such as fidelity, responsibility and agency (Castro and Ergun 2017; Federici and Santaemilia 2022). These trends have also shown us that in any theory there is not only one perspective but many and varied, and that these can be different according to the linguistic/cultural/historical/social context of the reader and interpreter of a text. These theoretical positions have demonstrated that, in subtle ways, translation has the power to transmit values and ideas, and have argued that, as linguistic/cultural mediators, we need to be accountable for this power. They have made it clear that, through translation, political thoughts run from one context to another acquiring new shapes and nuances. We are also aware now, as Emek Ergun says in her chapter devoted to feminist translation ethics, that translation has a “disruptive potential” (115) when intersecting with colonialism, capitalism and heteropatriarchy.

Part 2 is dedicated to an analysis of ethical issues in distinct domains of professional translation (cf. Lambert’s chapter), from literature (Alvstad) to conference (Ren and Yin) and public service interpreting (Pöllabauer and

Topolovec), to activism (Boéri and Delgado Luchner) and technology (Bowker), etc. All the essays included in this section have as a central thread the translator's role in his/her professional context and the many challenges he/she has to face in balancing personal values and professional requests. Very interestingly, Salah Basalamah's chapter deals with volunteering and non-professional translators, identifying them as 'connectors, transformers, and articulators of people, information, ideas and knowledge' (238). Research in this "relatively uncharted territory" (Pérez-González and Susam-Saraeva 2014: 149) of great relevance (Evrin and Meyer 2016) opens up new avenues and insights for Translation Studies. In the chapter that closes this section Michael Cronin underlines three main issues which we need to reflect upon in the times that this author refers to as the age of the Anthropocene (Cronin 2017): the role of machine translation in a globalised world, the status of minoritised languages and the importance of translation acts for the well-being of any living creature on our planet.

Part 3, with contributions by Baixauli-Olmos, Moorkens and Rocchi, Pacheco Aguilar and Dizdar, Mellinger and Baer, among others, is dedicated to the importance of translators in education, to our educational mission and our role as teachers in training translation students. Certainly, these are important issues to be discussed for a global understanding of the role of translators and interpreters in any part of the globe. This section reminds us of the importance of being aware of the pedagogical aspect of ethics in any context we live and work. If it is clear that any social, cultural and political context is marked by its distinctiveness, it is also a fact that as educators we have a great responsibility, no matter the actual situation in which we teach. In his essay Georgios Floros reminds us of the importance of our choices in teaching and of the necessity to create a dialogue between the academia and the professional world; he underlines that we must be ready to adapt our teaching and training in line with social and political changes, and that we must be aware of possibilities for cross-fertilization with professional domains. Academia needs to open its door to society, and as teachers we have to create connections with the professional world, so that there can be a mutual understanding of emerging necessities and priorities for collaboratively fine-tuning good practices of translation.

Part 4 develops even further some aspects dealt with in Part 3 and presents a variety of translation and interpreting practices, from child language brokering (Angelelli), to mediating practices in times of conflict and crisis (Tryuk), translation practices in relation with sacred texts (Israel), or the practice of "linguistic first aid" (Probirskaja), and the topics of accessibility and linguistic rights (Hirvonen and Kinnunen). All these practices are arenas of doubts and dilemmas and "ethical stress" (Hubscher-Davidson), and they demonstrate that there is a subtle line between "one's ethical values and expected behaviours in the translation and interpreting professions" (8). In their chapter about collaboration and control in literary translation Outi Paloposki and Nike Pokorn outline how in the "collective performance" (458)

of translation the interventions of different agents (translators, editors, publishers, literary agents) make clear the clashing of ethical values. The invisibility of these agents in addition to that of the translator (Venuti 1995) complicates any reflection on the translator's work even more, a consideration which should lead us to take into account the conflicting agendas of the many professionals involved in fields of shifting boundaries and ample explanatory potential about translation in general (Boase-Beier et al. 2014) such as literary translation.

Overall, the volume offers new insights both on theoretical stances and practical issues dealing with ethical concerns for translators and interpreters outlining how complex and controversial it can be to get to a precise and single definition of ethics in translation; it is thanks to its openness to many perspectives that it can certainly become a fruitful resource for researchers and students of translation and interpreting studies. Editors have demonstrated that there is a long way to go in relation with such a central issue in Translation Studies, and the volume can be read as a springboard for further research. In fact, when we think about ethics in translation we do have an infinite issue to be investigated ever more thoroughly, and undoubtedly this is a very good start.

References

- **Aristotle** (2000[1994]). *Nicomachean Ethics*. Translated by W.D Ross. Oxford: The Clarendon Press.
- **Baker, Mona and Carol Maier** (eds) (2011). *Ethics and the curriculum* (special issue). *The Interpreter and Translator Trainer* 5(1).
- **Berman, Sandra and Michael Wood** (eds) (2005). *Nation, Language and the Ethics of Translation*. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press.
- **Boase-Beier, Jean, Antoinette Fawcett and Wilson Philips** (eds.) (2014). *Literary Translation. Redrawing the Boundaries*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- **Castro, Olga and Emek Ergun** (eds) (2017). *Feminist Translation Studies. Local and Transnational Perspectives*. London: Routledge.
- **Cronin, Michael** (2017). *Eco-Translation. Translation and Ecology in the Age of Anthropocene*. London: Routledge.
- **Evrin, Feyza and Berndt Meyer** (eds) (2014). *Non-Professional interpreting and Translation* (special issue). *European Journal of Applied Linguistics* 4(1).
- **Federici, Eleonora and José Santaemilia** (eds) 2022. *New Perspectives on Gender and Translation Studies. New Voices for Transnational Dialogues*. London: Routledge.
- **Pérez-González, Luis and Şebnem Susam-Saraeva** (2012). "Non-professionals Translating and Interpreting." *The Translator* 18(2), 149-165.
- **Pym Anthony** (2012). *On Translator Ethics: Principles for Mediation between Cultures*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

- **van Doorslaer, Luc and Peter Flynn** (eds) (2013). *Eurocentrism in Translation Studies*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- **Venuti, Lawrence** (1995). *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*. London: Routledge.

Eleonora Federici
University of Ferrara, Italy
eleonora.federici@unife.it