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International and/or national philosophical terms in the domain of philosophy

Summary

Philosophy as a universal system of knowledge and the main corpus of the philosophical terminology consists of international terms. There are cases, however, when philosophers choose to, create a native word instead of employing a well-known international term. The term *Meddelelse*, for instance, was introduced by the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard. According to him, different aspects of communication are included in this concept to be denominated by the Danish word *Meddelelse*. Another example in this respect is the national term introduced by the Latvian philosopher Rihards Kūlis for the international term *nacionālā identitāte*. Contemporary philosophers tend to claim that philosophy does not belong only to the elitist part of the society. If such is the case, the philosophers try to facilitate the comprehension process for the native readers in order to ensure a deeper understanding of definite notions. Hence they endeavour to accommodate their writing in the way their readers could fully grasp the meaning of the intended message.

Keywords: comprehension, international terms, native language terms, philosophical terms, synonymy, terminology.

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Introduction

Among the philosophical terminology, international lexis holds a special and permanent place due to the fact that philosophy as a science is the result of both the intellectual development of the whole civilization and spiritual communication between different nations. Philosophical terminology already in its basic stock is international. A significant part of its terms have been coined on the base of Latin and Greek origin. Such is the basic classical stock of philosophical terms, words familiar to many of us: *substance* [substance], *matērija* [matter], *forma* [form], *racionālais* [rational], *indivīds* [individual], *kvalitāte* [quality], *kvantitāte* [quantity], *universālais* [universal], *elements* [element], *proporcija* [proportion], *refleksija* [reflection], *abstrakcija* [abstraction], *absurds* [absurd], *arguments* [argument], *aksioma* [axiom], *princips* [principle], *kategorija* [category], *singulārais* [singular], *partikulārais* [particular], *kauzālais* [causal], *kauzalitāte* [causality], *fantāzija* [fancy, imagination], *ideja* [idea], *eksistence* [eksistence], *kontemplācija* [contemplation], *objekts* [object], *kontinuitāte* [continuity], *dedukcija* [deduction], *doktrīna* [doctrin], *intuīcija* [intuition], *intelekts* [intellect], *inteligiblais* [intelligible], *transcendents* [transcendental], *realitāte* [reality], *hipotēze* [hypothesis], *identitāte* [identity], *loģika* [logic], *fenomens* [phenomenon], *empīrisks* [empiric], *empīrisms* [empiricism], and many others.

In our time, the material of classical languages is used to denote concepts created in the 20th century, as, for instance, to denote the philosophic trend – phenomenology [*fenomenoloģija*], which by its name already reflects the direction of theoretical research, namely, focusing on phenomena. If the word *fenomenaloģija* [phenomenology] was replaced by the Latvian combination of words *mācība par parādībām* [teaching about phenomena], then – how do we differentiate the philosophic trend *fenomenaloģija* [phenomenology] from the philosophic trend *fenomenālisms* [phenomenalism] which also studies phenomena? Some solution could, of course, be found.

Here we face a condition which speaks in favor of the use of internationalisms in philosophical lexis. This condition is the precision of expression. In his time, Professor Teodors Celms, at analyzing the use of terms *realitāte* [reality] and *īstenība* [reality], *fenomens* [phenomenon] and *parādība* [phenomenon], gave preference to words of international origin. In his scholarly paper “Dabas fenomens un dabas realitāte” [The Phenomenon of Nature and the Reality of Nature] he explains his choice in this way: “The opposition *fenomens – realitāte* [phenomenon – reality] might have been as well denoted by Latvian words as the opposition *parādība – īstenība*. However, since not only both above mentioned foreign words, but also both respective Latvian words are polysemic and, consequently, the meaning they will be used in should be strictly defined beforehand, the use of foreign words might be of greater advantage, because at using them we are usually more careful” (1939; my translation).

The advantages of the use of international terms in the philosophical terminology

The contemporary philosophers – representatives of English analytical philosophy, when addressing the problems of articulation and characterizing the state of national languages introduced the terms *ambiguity* and *vagueness*. The term *ambiguity* means ‘having multiple meanings’, i. e., ‘to misinterpret the word due to its polysemy’. This term is used in contrast to the term *vagueness* – ‘uncertainty’, ‘obscurity’, ‘non-concreteness’ which is characteristic of the word as the element of a linguistic system. This is a phenomenon which any natural language possesses. Here the indefiniteness of borders between the word as a lexical unit of a general vocabulary and the word as a term in any field of knowledge is disclosed.

Internationalisms are more accurate also in the respect that certain terms are associated with a specific trend of philosophy, thus helping to orientate oneself in the diversity of existing theoretical positions. For instance, the term *deskripcijas teorija* [theory of description] associates with a definite trend in philosophy and linguistics, while its synonym *aprakstīšanas teorija* [theory of description] does not evoke such associations. The term *verifikācijas metode* [method of verification] is related to the trend of logical positivism and the names of philosophers of the Vienna circle – Rudolf Carnap, Moritz Schlick, and Otto Neurath. The term *redukcijas procedūra* [procedure of reduction] does not associate with some common simplifying action, but rather with the trend of philosophy and Edmund Husserl’s theoretical thought.

Consequently, contrary to a national word, a foreign word is more accurate since it basically does not have undesirable associations, on the contrary – it has desirable associations. In reader’s consciousness, international terms of philosophy are associated with a definite philosophical trend or with a specific philosopher either in the history of philosophy or in our times. Moreover, the international word as a term does not have those associations that a national word as a word of a general vocabulary might have.

International words usually are also more useful from the aspect of word building and term nesting, for example, *pragmatika*, *pragmatiskā filozofija*, *pragmatisms*, *pragmatīķis*, *pragmatiskais paradokss* [pragmatics, pragmatic philosophy, pragmatism, pragmatist, pragmatic paradox], or: *predikācija* and *predikācijas paradokss* [predication and predication paradox], *implikācija* and *implikācijas paradokss* [implication and implication paradox], *semantika* and *semantiskais paradokss* [semantics and semantic paradox].

Consequently, in comparison with the terms of a national language the international word has several advantages. The positive aspects for the choice and use of internationalisms are as follows:

An international term is known internationally; it is more precise as a concept designator, since it cannot be misinterpreted due to its polysemy or vagueness typical of any natural language (it is a phenomenon topical within the frame of one language); it lacks ambiguity which appears in the contrastive aspect due to the differences in the semantic scope of words in various languages; it does not possess undesirable associations, on the contrary – it has desirable associations; finally – it is useful from the aspect of word building and term nesting (see also Ikere 1991: 64–67).

The reasons for the creation and use of native language terms in the philosophical terminology

And still, despite all these undoubtable advantages, the process of Lettonizing international words has taken and is taking place in philosophy. In both the dictionary of philosophical terms and the usage of words by contemporary Latvian philosophers, absolute synonyms are such terms as: *pastāvēšana* – *eksistence* [existence], *līdzāspastāvēšana* – *koeksistence* [coexistence], *cēlonība* – *kauzalitāte* [causality], *divotība* – *dualitāte* [duality], *atsevišķais* – *singulārais* [singular], *atsevišķība* – *singularitāte* [singularity], *tāpatība* – *identitāte* [identity].

If a foreign word has been Lettonized successfully, the Latvian equivalent is no longer so easy to eradicate from the sphere of usage, and it is vigorously forming a term nest: *identitāte* – *tāpatība* [identity], *idents* – *tāpatīgs* [identical], and the difference in meaning appears as well *identitāte* as *tāpatība*, and *identitāte* as *tāpatīgums*. Lettonizing the terms is a spontaneous process to some extent, but it is a phenomenon to reckon with, though it could create and is sometimes creating undesired synonymy in terminology.

In our time, the material of classical languages is used to denote concepts created in the 20th century, as for instance to denote the philosophic trend – phenomenology [*fenomenoloģija*], which by its name already reflects the direction of theoretical research, namely, focusing on phenomena. If the word *fenomenoloģija* [phenomenology] was replaced by the Latvian combination of words *mācība par parādībām* [teaching about phenomena], then – how do we differentiate the philosophic trend *fenomenoloģija* [phenomenology] from the philosophic trend *fenomenālisms* [phenomenalism] which also studies phenomena? Some solution could, of course, be found.

Does this phenomenon emerge only due to the enthusiastic desire to develop and revive the Latvian language and make it subsist as Latvian? Here we could speak about linguists' likings and dislikes, about linguists' ethics concerning their attitude to their native tongue, and we could quote our linguists – classics as well. We could also add that the contemporary writers-purists are the centurions of

today who guard our common property, it being the Latvian language as one of the most ancient languages in the Indo-European language family. In this connection it might be worthwhile to mention Martin Heidegger's idea that it is language that is a human's dwelling, the space of his living and understanding.

At the initial stage of concept's appearance, if the concept has developed on a foreign base, synonymy is a natural, psychologically determined process. Naturalness may be criticized or rejected, it may be praised or sneered at. But it simply exists independent of a reader's viewpoint. In my opinion, for such a stable phenomenon, there must be a deeper cause, relating to the sphere of understanding rather than to the formal, i.e. typical linguist sphere.

Philosophy is international and national at the same time. Philosophy reflects the development of the theoretical thought of civilization in general and the link of this thought with the world culture. Philosophy is national not as being something accidental, but as the manifestation of nation's spirit, as an essential component of nation's culture. Philosophy does not exhaust itself by the thought about the subordination of concepts of matter and consciousness, though, unfortunately, the majority of intellectuals in contemporary Latvia associate philosophy as a science with this notion.

To a certain extent, some notion about the mutual relations between the international and the national in the sphere of understanding can be given by the ideas expressed at the 25th international conference of phenomenology in September, 1990, Riga. Specifically, the idea about the relations between culture and sense, being discussed in the report by the Lithuanian philosopher T. Sodeika from Kaunas. Perhaps, it might seem interesting for the philosophers to know in what form these ideas have been woven into the linguists' consciousness. These ideas are still like outlines of shadows on the cave walls, and they have not yet managed to obtain the strict contours of theoretical postulates.

So, – the assimilation of sense into culture as a system takes place gradually, and this process has as if three stages: comprehension, assimilation and system. First, the sense is to be grasped and comprehended (for comparison in German: ergreifen, begreifen and Begriff). First the comprehension of the concept takes place. In order to comprehend, the unfamiliar has to be approximated to something already known. In the course of approximation and correlation, the assimilation occurs. When assimilation is already the act that has happened, the end-result may acquire the character of a system and manifest itself both on a thinking level and linguistically. All the above said relates to the domain of thinking, but to the same extent, to my mind, this as well could be attributed to the encoding process of a foreign word – an international linguistic sign of a philosophical concept – into the structure of a native language. Language is the space wherein communication and comprehension take place. The first stage is the comprehension of the unfamiliar concept and its representation – a foreign word. Comprehension is approximation.

We deduce a foreign concept to something already known and correlate with it. During the process of comprehension the general sign is recognized, as the representatives of hermeneutics maintain. The recognition of a general sign may materialize through tools of a native language, this is just why a foreign word is translated. In the process of assimilation, associative links with other elements of the given system emerge: with concepts on the level of thinking and with terms on the level of language (see also Ikere 1991: 68).

The concept, having been designated by a native language term, besides becoming more familiar for the reader or listener, meantime might bring to light a so far unnoticed shade of meaning of the notion under discussion, thus enlarging the scope of perceiving and understanding of the author's proposed idea.

In order to exemplify the case under discussion the instances from the Latvian philosopher Rihards Kūlis's and the Danish famous philosopher Søren Kierkegaard's texts are given below.

The national language term *nacionālā savdabība* (national identity, national particularity), its international counterpart *nacionālā identitāte* (national identity), and the issue of synonymy

Within the framework of the national research program "National Identity (Language, History, Culture, Human Security)", the representatives of Latvian humanitarian sciences have studied the question of identity for several years (2010–2013). What in fact is the scope and meaning of the concepts *identity* and *national identity*?

Theoretical literature mentions that the term "identity" has become a word used to express a content of different kind, it has become an "all-purpose-term" in some sense: "Nowadays identity has become a lock picker (*passe-par-tout*), an omnipresent word and term (all-purpose-term) used to express one's own individual or collective feelings and perceptions of self-confidence and their uniqueness." (Isaacs 2010: XII, cit. from KF 2017: 92).

As to the concept "national identity", which is associated with the adequate expression of a certain world view and existential structures in Latvian, interesting and significant are the philosopher Rihards Kūlis' findings which he writes about in his scholarly paper *Kultūras fenomenoloģija, latviskā savdabība un rietumu dzīves formas* [Cultural Phenomenology, Latvian Particularity and Western Life Forms] (2015: 499–549). At discussing the problems of cultural phenomenology, Kūlis says that "in Latvian research literature, 'identity' is being mentioned over and over again and is being used in so diverse contents and relations that the real meaning of this word is difficult to understand or is not understandable at all" (2015: 523– 524; my translation).

Proving that the sense denoted by the international term is not quite clear and can be easily misinterpreted, professor suggests using the word combination *nacionālā savdabība* [national particularity], thus replacing the foreign word “identity” by a word of a native language. Kūlis supports his viewpoint by showing how the question of identity is being solved in theoretical literature, first of all in psychoanalysts’ works on the phenomenon of personality’s identity. Kūlis states that in this regard psychoanalysts are interested in the wholeness of psyche, in the unity of a person, in undividedness. When explaining the content of the terms *identity* and *national identity* the philosopher asserts: “At solving the problems of cultural and national identity, we could first ask about particularity, about our nature as a wholeness. Possibly, in the term – *savdabība* [particularity] – the Latvian translated counterpart of the English *identity* would have been found then after all” (2015: 529; my translation).

Culture as a universal wholeness takes a significant place in the research on national particularity. Kūlis explains the connection between culture and identity of a nation, as well as the understanding of the concept of national identity:

In my opinion, the concept ‘national particularity’ is actually the same as the concept ‘culture’ or ‘cultural particularity’. The way how culture (national particularity) occurs, namely, [culture as – Z.I.] specific forms of society’s self-realization, is related to such world view and existential structures which, once established, serve for a long time as something like a scaffolding of human existence, form its ‘carcass’. These are stable psychological structures, a certain totality of tools for acquiring, understanding and interpreting the world (2015: 533; my translation).

The coinage of native language terms, especially in cases when it refers to the universally accepted international terms, raises, however, the issue of synonymy. One of the principles in the general theory of terminology is the requirement for univocity (i.e., a one to one relationship between concept and term) (RETS 2011: 28) or mononymy (Skujiņa 2002: 46–48). This requirement means that synonymy in terminology is undesirable and should be avoided. It relates the domain of philosophy as well, since in the context, when in real language use, the range of the sense of some philosophical concepts designated by definite native language terms may not always be so clearly delineated.

In case of synonymy, especially, if there are native language words to be chosen from, there is a question, however, which one of them to give the preference. For instance, for *savdabība* there are synonyms *savdabīgums*, *savveidība*, *īpatnība* [particularity, singularity]. This row of synonyms is given in LSV (Latviešu valodas sinonīmu vārdnīca) in the editions of 1964, and the following editions of 1972, and 2002. The word *savveidība*, however, is not included in LLVV (1989 VII (1)). At present it is given as a separate entry in the database of Latvian word

thesaurus. It is also presented in the *Latvian – English Dictionary* with a label *filoz.* and translations *particularity, individuality*. (LAV 1997: 591) The philosopher Māris Vecvagars seems to give preference to the word *savveidība* instead of *savdabība* in characterizing, for instance, the particularity of philosophy in Plato's interpretation. (Vecvagars 1990) He has used also coinages *savveidīgs* and *savveids* in the aforementioned article. He writes, for instance:

Significantly, that the particularity [*savveidīgums*, own mode] of philosophy and just therefore the impossibility to directly derive it from human's conscious life experience as well as impossibility of reducing it to the generalization of human's knowledge have been perceived quite scornfully not only by the average Hellenes, but by the thoughtful Ancient Greek creators of spiritual atmosphere as well (83; my translation).

One of these ways is philosophy – phases of human existence [...] This way, which you can both trot and nimbly walk along, as well as toddle and go slowly along it, is and will remain a poetic way. While you go along it, sometimes you have to grope for something, at times you have to seek for something, occasionally to gain and lose something, and then start off again. Such might be the *savveids* [particularity, own mode] of this way as Plato sees it" (101; my translation).

Meddelelse versus its Latinized form in Kierkegaard's texts

To exemplify the case when a philosopher gives preference to a word of a native language instead of an international term, and, moreover, the latter being an internationalism widely used in a scientific discourse, we can mention one more example. It will concern the Danish philosophical language. It is the word *Meddelelse* chosen by the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard as a special term instead of the internationalism *communication*. The explorers of Kierkegaard's philosophical heritage (Velga Vēvere, Alastair Hannay) hold a view that this has been an intentional choice, since Kierkegaard could have used as well Latinism – *Kommunikation* – widely spread in Danish in its classical understanding. The Latvian philosopher Velga Vēvere draws attention to the original interpretation of the concept *communication* provided by Kierkegaard – it is the communication of existence and existential communication simultaneously. By using a word of his mother tongue, Kierkegaard has emphasized the specificity of his own understanding of the concept *communication*, namely, "communication as a form of intercourse and information, and communication as the existence and manifestation of

identity.” (Vēvere 2011: 431) By titling her research on Kierkegaard’s theoretical heritage “Søren Kierkegaard: to be and herald”, Vēvere has, in my opinion, precisely expressed the basic Kierkegaard’s attitude to life and philosophy – to exist and to herald. This is just the content that the concept *Meddelelse* also embodies. Vēvere points out that an adequate reproduction of the term and concept *Meddelelse* in European languages has presented for the translators considerable difficulties. The philosopher thinks that to reproduce it in Latvian is quite problematic, since “literally it means ‘announcement’, ‘notification’ or ‘informing’. In other words, the question arises whether Kierkegaard in general speaks about communication and whether using the international term *komunikācija* in Latvian translation is valid” (2011: 42).

The translation of this Danish word in different languages varies: both trying to find some reference in the native language and using the international word. Vēvere points out that in German the translation of this term is not unequivocal – if in the full edition of complete works by Kierkegaard the terms *Mitteilung* and *Existenzmitteilung* have been used (corresponding to Danish *Eksistens-Meddelelse*), then in latest publications two terms – *Mitteilung* and *Kommunikation* are to be found. In the edition of complete works by Kierkegaard in French the Latinism *Communication* is used, while – as Vēvere observes – a precise reproduction of the term would have, possibly, been *Impartir* (providing, giving). In Latvian, the semantically closest words of the term *Meddelelse*, in Vēvere’s opinion, might be – *sniegšana*, *informēšana* vai *dalīšanās ar kaut ko vēstītāja rīcībā esošu* (‘giving’, ‘informing’ or ‘sharing something that is at the disposal of the informer’). However, the words *sniegšana* [giving] and *informēšana* [informing] involve the activeness of the doer-information provider and passiveness of its receiver, which contradicts the Kierkegaard’s thought. If *Meddelelse* were translated by native words or by a combination of words, forming a phrase, then first, it would be complicated to use it in the text, and second, the receiver’s active role would not be shown. The author mentions that “sharing” might have been spoken about, however, if we were talking about sharing of existence, then the Latvian reader would not understand it purely from the linguistic aspect, and the specific sense of Kierkegaard’s communication concept would not be understandable either (2011: 42–45). Due to these considerations, the author thinks that in both the research on Kierkegaard’s philosophy and in translations of his writings in Latvian the correct choice is using the international word *komunikācija* [communication], at the same time bearing in mind the fact that the speech is about specifically kierkegaardic conditions of communication (2011: 45).

Conclusion

Philosophy is a science which “in a sense collects together in one place a seemingly blurry but by no means painless problem circle of philosophy’s present-day existence form” (Vecvagars 1989: 10). However, being focused on the human’s world, philosophy can provide answers in the quest for the meaning of life during the matter-of-fact course of contemporary man’s life-world. Society’s wider part possible should be introduced to philosophy, it is not the possession of the elite, of the anointed ones only – this seems to have been the conviction with which, for instance, the outstanding Latvian Professor Maija Kūle has written her philosophical texts intended for the Latvian audience. This, possibly, might account for the fact that alongside the international philosophical term a term of a Latvian origin is frequently used, or the explanation is provided. Maija Kūle has used this writing style in her fundamental works for several decades, starting with the book “Philosophy” which she wrote in collaboration with Rihards Kūlis (1966, 1967), as well as in works “*Eirodzīve: formas, principi, izjūtas*” [“Euro-life: Forms, principles, Feelings”] (2006) and *Jābūtības vārdi. Etīdes par zināšanām un vērtībām mūsdienu Latvijā* [Moral Obligation Words. Sketches on Knowledge and Values in Contemporary Latvia] (2016).

To conclude, philosophers should and they are trying to accommodate their style and wording so as to enable the cognizing subject to grasp the intended meaning of the message. In the Latvian philosophical terminology there are created and exist national terms as synonyms for the international terms to make the process of understanding more agreeable for the native language community. Native language philosophical terms are like meaning-bestowing nodes in the vast Umwelt of knowledge meant for the investigating subject to find one’s way there.

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