
Textual Scholarship as a Bridge “between Philology and Hermeneutics”:

Discussing the Translation of Terminology

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When I was kindly offered the opportunity to read a paper here, the first thing I had to consider was which language to choose, English or Japanese. Finally, I decided to choose English as I thought it was too difficult to discuss the topic of this conference in Japanese: “Bunkengaku to kaishakugaku no aida” in Japanese, and its official English translation “Between Philology and Hermeneutics”.

Why is it too difficult in Japanese? Because the Japanese notion of “Bunkengaku” apparently contains too many complicated meanings. The word “Bunkengaku” could be usually translated as “philology” like in this venue. But according to my observation there are alternative interpretations for this Japanese word.

One of those possibilities is “scholarly editing”. The evidences of this conjecture can be detected in numerous discourses in the field of Japanese literary studies. For example, there is the phrase “Ikeda-Bunkengaku” which is often uttered among scholars of classic Japanese literature. Ikeda is a common last name in Japanese, but the name within this expression suggests the specific last name of Kikan Ikeda, the former professor of the University of Tokyo’s Japanese Literature Department. The phrase specifically indicates a peculiar method for making a reading text from various witnesses which professor Ikeda adapted when editing “Tosa-Nikki”, one of the most important classical texts originated in the tenth century. So in this case the word “Bunkengaku” clearly means a kind of methodology concerning scholarly editing.

Another example of this usage of “Bunkengaku” is found in a debate which occurred in the 1970s between Yukio Miyoshi and Eiichi Tanizawa. Both were then notable professors of modern Japanese literature who had a dispute mainly about the legitimacy of the procedure for the edition of the complete works of Kitamura Tokoku, a modern Japanese writer in the second half of the 19th century. One of the articles written by Miyoshi in the frame of this discussion was entitled “Bunkengaku no kowasa ni muchi na ban’yu ni tsuite”, which might be translated as “On the recklessness caused from ignorance about the danger of discussing ‘Bunkengaku’”. Though I have to omit the full details due to lack of time, the word “Bunkengaku” applied here can not be interpreted as “philology” either, but as principles of scholarly editing or issues on textual criticism.

The other similar alternative of the translation in question is “bibliography”. One of the plain instances is found in the book named *Nihon Bungaku Genron* which can be translated as *Principles of Japanese Literary Studies*. This book, written by Jin’ichi Konishi was published recently in 2007

after the death of the scholar of Japanese literature. Konishi pointed out there that the meaning of the word “Bunkengaku” has changed in the process of the reception of the Western original notion and the derivation has already prevailed until the present. He suggests further that the derived meaning should be identified with “bibliography” while using the established English word. The Anglo-American scholarly field, however, within the past thirty years has actually transformed itself and it is part of the academic area which Konishi intended to refer to which is currently called “textual studies” or “textual scholarship” rather than “bibliography”, which I will take up later.

The usage of the term—not the secondary but the original meaning of “Bunkengaku” that is to say “philology”—with this meaning is still found in some discourses of scholars of Western literature in Japan. For example, a book published in 1995, written by Tadao Shimomiya, the scholar of German linguistics, was titled with *Doitsu Geruman Bunkengaku Sho-jiten*, which can be translated as *the Pocket Dictionary of German Philology*. This small dictionary contains the headings like “Althochdeutsch”, “Märchen”, “Mittelhochdeutsh”, “Mythologie”, “Volkskunde” and so on. “Bunkengaku” in this case clearly means not a method of editing but the more extensive traditional discipline in the Humanities. Of particular note is that the author of this dictionary intended to use the Japanese word “Bunkengaku” as the translation of not the English word “philology” but the German “Philologie”. More precisely the German term is historically the exact original notion which was imported to Japan as one of the important European fields of knowledge in the process of Japanese modernization. This fact can be confirmed in any dictionary of Japanese in which every account under the headword “Bunkengaku” shows the German word “Philologie” as the source of the Japanese word.

In order to give a better understanding for the term “Philologie” in German, I would like to mention my own experience. I originally studied German literature and in the 1990s attending the University of Munich for three years. At that time the name of the faculty I belonged to was “Institut für Deutsche Philologie”. The faculty consisted of several departments like “Germanistische Linguistik”, “Germanistische Mediävistik” and “Neuere Deutsche Literatur”. So the word “Philologie” is the superordinate of the numerous hyponyms such as linguistics and literary studies by the definition of the German language. The example of the pocket dictionary of “Doitsu Geruman Bunkengaku” shows that the word “Bunkengaku” still holds the original meaning at least among the Japanese scholars of German literature.

To sum up, it can be pointed out that concerning the interpretation of the word “Bunkengaku” there is a large difference between the scholars of Japanese literature and of the European literature. So if one would speak about “Bunkengaku” in Japanese, one should precisely know which audience group to aim at. This judgment is however sometimes very difficult especially in the session of international and interdisciplinary discussions like the present one. So to reiterate, that’s why I’ve chosen English as my language of this conference.

But to be honest, while speaking English now, I still feel quite uneasy, because I doubt if there is really any need to think about the audience group in the case of English. Is there actually a firm consensus regarding the term “philology” among English speakers? Or is there really no difference between the English “philology” and the German “Philologie”? I’m afraid that I have been led through a kind of maze.

At least I already knew technical terms concerning the field of textual studies where there are numerous semantic divergences between synonyms of both the languages. One of the most significant examples of such dissimilarity is the one between “critical edition” and “Kritische Ausgabe”. These two terms might be at first considered as being completely the same but they are actually fairly different from a specialist perspective. This distinction has already been clarified in

1995 by Hans Walter Gabler, the German textual scholar, as follows:

By English language definition, the adjective “critical” refers to the establishment of the text, and it strongly implies the editor’s shaping activity. The editor constructs the text, which in modern Anglo-American editing tends to mean that he or she establishes it eclectically from all evidence of authorial text (...) provided in the authoritative transmission.¹

In German editing, by contrast, the editor lays more emphasis on the analysis or the critique of the text’s genesis and history than the establishment of the text. I quote Gabler again: “The aim of a German edition is not to establish a text in the sense of critically shaping it. An edition provides as its edited text, rather a segment or slice from the text’s history”.² This difference surely shows the existence of a large cultural gap between the Anglo-American and the German tradition concerning scholarly editing.

I would like to take this opportunity to mention that this kind of cultural gap has recently been turning into a very serious matter of debate among textual scholars, since the progress of the information technology has required us to consider the issues of editing in a global context. Consequently transnational and translingual communications have already been repeatedly attempted to fill the opening during these past twenty years. It has to be also noted here that these critical topics unfortunately remain virtually absent from scholarly debates in Japan.

Therefore Christian Wittern, who works on Chinese Buddhist and Daoist texts at Kyoto University, and I organized the first international conference in Japan concerning textual studies this March in 2010 at Saitama University in order to introduce these latest discussions from Europe to Japan. Fortunately over twenty scholars from seven Western countries including South Africa came to Japan hoping to finally communicate with Japanese scholars about these issues. Returning to the subject, the whole experience of this organization made me realize more deeply the seriousness of the communication problem among the European scholars. For instance, one of the invited keynote speeches of that time was written in German which had to be translated into English for the sake of the audiences’ understanding. During this translation work which I engaged in with Wittern, we were thrown into considerable confusion because we noticed that even the most fundamental and central notions there was a discrepancy between German and English. It was the very name of the scholarly discipline in question: Editions-wissenschaft in German. Bodo Plachta, the keynote speaker and the German representative scholar of the field who repeatedly used this German word in his paper. The literal translation of the German term may be “editorial scholarship” but this expression does not seem to be employed at all. Instead of it concepts like “scholarly editing”, “textual studies”, and “textual scholarship” are usually put to use, as are already applied here too. But exactly which one of them is the most appropriate synonym of the German term? In other words: what is the essential difference among these English concepts that apparently indicate the same thing?

After some discussion, Wittern and I decided to choose the word “textual scholarship” as the translation of “Editions-wissenschaft”. The grounds for this decision were firstly that the English word seemed to be the most commonly used as the authentic name for the Anglo-American academic area and secondly that we had already chosen the term to express our conference theme: “New Directions in Textual Scholarship”.

Additionally there existed one more reason which was related to my own previous conclusion.

1 Hans Walter Gabler, “Introduction: Textual Criticism and Theory in Modern German Editing”, *Contemporary German Editorial Theory*, ed. Hans Walter Gabler, George Bornstein and Gillian Borland Pierce (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995): 2–3.

2 Gabler, 3.

Yuzuru Okubo, Masahide Kanzaki, and I translated the book *From Gutenberg to Google* by Peter Shillingsburg, the American representative scholar and actually one of the keynote speakers we invited for that conference. Its Japanese version was published last year in 2009. During the translation work I had already confronted such an interpretation issue concerning the name of the discipline not between English and German, but between English and Japanese. The word “textual scholarship” can be literally translated as “Tekusuto Gaku”. The word “Tekusuto”, however, bears less of the connotation of materiality than the English word “text” does. According to our sense of the Japanese language, “Tekusuto” implies something akin to “contents” or “information”. Besides the Japanese word has gained some specific kinds of connotation since the introduction of literary theories concerning “textuality” mainly from France in the 1970s and 1980s. So we decided to avoid using the word “Tekusuto” and to employ the Japanese word “Henshu-Bunkengaku” as the translation of “textual scholarship”. In addition we determined to apply “Henshu-Bunkengaku” to the interpretation of the two other concepts, “textual studies” and “scholarly editing”, because we could not find so many substantial differences among these concepts and gave up trying to create two more new terms for them. Actually the word “Henshu-Bunkengaku” had been coined by myself for the translation of the German terms, “Editionsphilologie” and “Editionswissenschaft”, when I had written the book *Atarashii Kafka: “Henshu” Ga Kaeru Tekusuto* published in 2002, which is translated as *Der neue Kafka: Wie die Edition den Text verändert*. “Henshu-Bunkengaku” consists of two Japanese words, “Henshu” and “Bunkengaku”. “Henshu” meaning “edition” and “Bunkengaku” meaning “philology”. Returning to the subject, I had already made a judgment that the German word “Editionswissenschaft” should correspond to the English word “textual scholarship”, although it had been mediated by the Japanese translation.

Additionally it should be mentioned that I finally encountered an essay dealing with this very issue. I learned then that there was no concrete answer at present regarding the aforementioned question: what is the essential difference among the English concepts, “textual scholarship”, “textual studies”, and “scholarly editing”. In the essay written by Rüdiger Nutt-Kofoth, the German textual scholar, in 2007, there is the enlightening and informative passage. Though it may be a bit too long, I quote the whole passage:

David Greetham in his extensive and still fundamental introduction of 1992 uses the term “textual scholarship” without hesitation. Yet his opening sentence indicates that Anglo-American editors also have terminological problems: “Textual studies is a discipline drawing in a sea of term”; to illustrate he gives no less than six different hyponyms for the term “bibliography” alone, which exist alongside other terms such as “textual analysis and textual criticism, textual editing, documentary editing, and social textual criticism”, but then classifies all of them under the general rubric “textual studies”. Besides, as he explains in the preface, he had originally intended to call his book “Paleography, Bibliography, and Textual Criticism”, because, when he first conceived of the book in the late 1970s, “there was no acceptable term to encompass all these activities”. Only later a “moderately successful attempt” was made to coin “textual scholarship” as the authoritative name for the discipline. Textual scholarship is in other words also a relatively new term, which is competing with other nomenclature. Evidence of this is that in 1995, only three years after his first book, Greetham published another important collection of essays on editorial matters in various disciplines and languages, this time under the title of *Scholarly Editing: A Guide to Research*. In addition to “textual scholarship” and “scholarly editing”, “textual studies” has remained in use as well, appearing prominently from 1984 to 2004 in the subtitle of the American journal *Text: An Interdisciplinary Annual of*

Textual Studies, the mouthpiece of the Society for Textual Scholarship founded in 1979.³

This statement clearly shows that there are not so many substantial differences among those synonyms in English and that the term “textual studies” remains in use as the most common, although “textual scholarship” was coined as the authoritative name for the discipline. It is also inferred there that the old traditional terms like “bibliography”, “textual criticism” and “paleography” have been already replaced with those two new hypernyms which have prevailed over these past thirty years. Nutt-Kofoth has also pointed out that in a similar way in the German language there exist several synonyms such as “Textkritik”, “Textologie”, “Editionsphilologie” and “Editionswissenschaft”, although they are somewhat more divergent between each other compared to the corresponding group of terms in English. Moreover he admits that the newest term “Editionswissenschaft” has apparently already surpassed the other old ones. In this regard the following passage should be cited:

Like its English counterpart “textual scholarship”, the German “Editionswissenschaft” is a relatively new coinage and owes its origin to the subtitle of the yearbook *editio: Internationales Jahrbuch für Editions-wissenschaft*, which first appeared in 1987.⁴

It should be especially noted that in this sentence it was clearly stated that the term “Editionswissenschaft” is the very counterpart of the term “textual scholarship”.

To resume the thread of my talk, at that conference in March, I learned one more important thing concerning the topic about which I’m now speaking. The other one of the three keynote speakers we invited was Dirk Van Hulle who is a Belgian scholar of textual studies and genetic criticism. He read his paper originally written in English, starting to give the following observation:

In Europe, in the 1970s and 1980s, the term “Philology” was banished from the title of many academic departments, and consequently from many diplomas. This decision reflected the tacit, implicit perception of a hierarchical difference between philological scholarship and literary criticism. Textual scholarship was considered “prescientific” in that it was believed to only deliver the texts that served as the starting point for the actual scientific endeavor—the interpretation of texts.⁵

The title of his paper is “Textual Scholarship and Genetic Criticism: a rapprochement”. As this title obviously shows, Van Hulle tried to emphasize the significance and the fruitfulness of the reconciliation between editing and interpretation, showing his convincing analysis of the textual genesis of *On the Origin of Species* by Charles Darwin. It was a marvelous speech and I was greatly fascinated by the results which such rapprochement could yield but at the same time I noticed that I was thrown again into another kind of confusion. The presupposition of Van Hulle’s argument was that—from the perspective of French “critique génétique”—“textual scholarship” and “philology” are generally regarded as the almost same and that both may usually not be the superordinate of the term “literary criticism” or “literary studies”. But, according to my understanding of “philology”, or, to be precise, “Philologie”, it always seems to be the highest hypernym in the terminological domain, as I have already mentioned, citing the name of the university faculty as an example. So, is the common view regarding the meaning of “philology” among the English speakers so

3 Rüdiger Nutt-Kofoth, “Editorial Scholarship and Literary Studies: Reflections on their Relationship from a German Perspective”, *Variants* 6 (2007): 34.

4 Kofoth, 34–35.

5 “Textual Scholarship and Genetic Criticism: a rapprochement”, reproduced with kind permission of Dirk Van Hulle.

different from my comprehension based on the German definition? In other words: is the English term “philology” semantically so much divergent from the German term “Philologie”? As far as I have inferred from numerous discourses among Anglo-American people, however, the sense of the English word seems quite similar to the German one. For example, in the book *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* by Edward W. Said, which was his last work published in 2004, there is the one chapter, the third chapter named “the Return to the Philology”. There, Said gives the explanation of the historical development of the discipline in question interestingly relating to the Arab-Islamic cultural tradition:

Philology is, literally, the love of words, but as a discipline it acquires a quasi-scientific intellectual and spiritual prestige at various periods in all of the major cultural traditions, including the Western and the Arabic-Islamic traditions that have framed my own development. Suffice it to recall briefly that in the Islamic tradition, knowledge is premised upon a philological attention to language beginning with the Koran, the uncreated word of God (and indeed the word “Koran” itself means reading), and continuing through the emergence of scientific grammar in Khalil ibn Ahmad and Sibawayh to the rise of jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and *ijtihad* and *ta’wil*, jurisprudential hermeneutics and interpretation, respectively. Later, the study of *fiqh al lughah*, or the hermeneutics of language, emerges in Arab-Islamic culture as possessing considerable importance as a practice for Islamic learning. All these involve a detailed scientific attention paid to language as bearing within it knowledge of a kind entirely limited to what language does and does not do. There was (...) a consolidation of the interpretive sciences that underlie the system of humanistic education, which was itself established by the twelfth century in the Arab universities of southern Europe and North Africa, well before its counterpart in the Christian West.⁶

This statement shows that Said’s understanding of the term “philology is close to the German language definition which places firm emphasis on linguistic aspects rather than editorial ones, which is similar to my own sense and maybe also to Japanese scholars of German literature. Of particular note is that from this account one could infer Said’s view concerning the notion of “hermeneutics”, too. In simple terms, “hermeneutics” is, in his opinion, one part of “philology” or one specific methodology within the frame of the comprehensive discipline. I share his point of view and this notion would be, I think, traditionally the most original one.

To be perfectly honest, when I was invited to this conference and was informed about its official theme, I felt that I finally found a small key to resolve my confusion. The very preposition “between” of the topic “between philology and hermeneutics” implies that there exists the assumption that “philology” and “hermeneutics” are two different things. This suggests that among the English speakers there are also several groups concerning the understanding of that sort of terminology just like there are among the Japanese people. Or is this presumption really correct? As far as I can ascertain from the presenters of this conference, it is apparently oriented to the community of the scholars of genetic criticism. So, bearing in mind that Van Hulle is also a scholar of the French discipline, it could be suggested that among French genetic critics there might be a kind of implicit consensus regarding the distinction between “philology” and “hermeneutics”.

At least it can be surely said that the distinction between “philology” and “genetic criticism” was created at the very beginning of the French discipline, which is pointed out by Van Hulle in his book *Textual Awareness* published in 2004:

6 Edward W. Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004): 58.

The term *critique génétique* was coined by Louis Hay in 1979 in the title of a collection of essays, *Essais de critique génétique*. (...) By coining a new term to denote what may seem an old critical activity, Louis Hay explicitly expressed the wish to distinguish genetic criticism from traditional philology.⁷

If in this regard the tacit agreement concerning the distinction between “philology” and “hermeneutics” also exists, I would definitely be led into a kind of much more complicated maze, because I have to take into account not only the differences between English language definition and German language one but also among English, German and French together.

The realization of the translingual and transcultural communication is thus a big challenge. But it is worth to do it; aiming at better understanding and higher knowledge we should try to reach various kinds of rapprochement as Van Hulle plausibly suggests with the one example. I also have been trying to create a kind of bridge, working on Franz Kafka’s uncompleted writings as my primary field of research. It was “Editionsphilologie” that I encountered in Germany in 1990s when I searched for the suitable methodology in order to combine both my interests in the edition and the interpretation of Kafka’s manuscripts. Although the term “Editionsphilologie” was apparently substituted by the new term “Editionswissenschaft” at present, I still consider this discipline as the substantial successor of the traditional term “philology”. That is why my Japanese coinage “Henshu-Bunkengaku” as the translation of “Editionswissenschaft” and its English counterpart “textual scholarship” contains the old Japanese word “Bunkengaku” which is the established translation of the German word “Philologie”.

As Van Hulle points out, in Europe, the term “philology” was already banished from the titles of many academic departments. At the university of Munich, the name of the faculty which I mentioned earlier has recently changed to “Fakultät für Sprach-und Literaturwissenschaften”. The reason of this decision might be related to some kind of negative connotation which this term “philology” historically carries. It might be also an important subject to be researched, which I will refrain from talking about at this time. Anyway in spite of its disappearance, the return to this old discipline was strongly advocated by Said. And it should be mentioned that Paul de Man also wrote an essay named the very same “the Return to Philology” which was published in the book *The Resistance to Theory* in 1986. “Philology” is thus apparently the last resort or hope of both the distinguished American critics. If so, “textual scholarship” as its virtual successor can be a hope.

“Between philology and hermeneutics”—this expression may be reconstituted into the other following words if one takes the aforementioned potential consensus among French scholars into account: “Between editing and interpretation”. And if the connotation of this theme would be a wish to find the way of rapprochement between those two things, this wish might have been somehow realized in the field of “Editionswissenschaft” or “Editionsphilologie”. In 2001 Herbert Kraft clearly proclaimed in the second edition of his book *Editionsphilologie* that “Edition ist eine interpretierende Arbeit”.⁸ In this academic area no one is currently in doubt that there is a connection between editing and interpretation. So it can be said that “Editionswissenschaft”, if it is translated into English means “textual scholarship”, and if into Japanese “Henshu-Bunkengaku” which is a unifying bridge between those two things, namely, “between philology and hermeneutics”.

7 Dirk Van Hulle, *Textual Awareness: A Genetic Study of Late Manuscripts by Joyce, Proust, and Mann*, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2004): 2.

8 Herbert Kraft, *Editionsphilologie*, 2nd ed. (Frankfurt/Main: Peter Lang, 2001): 200.