

Scholarly authors as self-translators

Tracing Hasan Hanafi's philosophical back-and-forth translations

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This paper examines traces of (self-)translation in the work of the Egyptian philosopher Hasan Hanafi (1935–2021), whose academic career reflects the increasing globality of the academic field. The paper analyses Hanafi's academic migration to France to complete his doctorate, his self-translational efforts to adapt to the French academic tradition, and the influence of his (physical and linguistic) migration on his later philosophical texts in Arabic. Hanafi was convinced that the 'archaic' Arabic language alienated Muslims from their own heritage, and in his later philosophical texts he thus sought to renew the Arabic language and to re-express fundamental concepts of the classical Islamic teachings. The concepts he aimed to re-express were already translated into French in his doctoral thesis. This article addresses these terminological translations into French and back into Arabic, and discusses the conceptual transformations that occurred on the way, inspired by Hanafi's reading of Husserl and the German Idealists.

Keywords: academic translation, philosophical translation, self-translation, Hasan Hanafi, academic migration, translation and terminology

1. Introduction: A long-term perspective on language and translation in the modern academic system

This article examines traces of (self-)translation in the work of Hasan Hanafi (1935–2021), a leading contemporary Egyptian philosopher, whose academic migratory path reflects the globality of the academic system in terms of increasing academic mobility and migration. After receiving a bachelor's degree in Islamic philosophy from Cairo University, Hanafi went on to complete a doctorate in philosophy at Sorbonne University in Paris (1956–1966), followed by

numerous visiting professorships that took him to the USA, Sudan, Kuwait, Morocco, Japan, and the United Arab Emirates. He then returned to Cairo University, where he worked and taught for the rest of his career as Professor of Philosophy and Comparative Religion. During the decade that he spent in France, Hanafi wrote three books in French, and inspired by this temporary change of language, he later placed language at the centre of his philosophy: convinced that it was the archaic language of classical Islamic teachings that made it difficult for contemporary Muslims to connect with their own heritage, Hanafi sought a linguistic renewal of the classical Islamic disciplines.

Through a close reading of Hanafi's French dissertation — *Les méthodes d'exégèse* 'The methods of exegesis' (Hanafi 1965) — and one of his foundational philosophical texts in Arabic — التراث والتجديد *At-turāt wa-t-taǧdīd* 'Heritage and renewal' (2012 [1980]) — I aim to show the productiveness of his temporary switch to French for his later philosophical work. Before turning to Hanafi, however, I will make a brief digression into the historical development of language and translation in the academic system from the eighteenth century to the present in order to set out the point of departure of this article.

What distinguishes the academic system of the eighteenth century from that of the present day is above all the shift away from a multilingual academic system to an increasingly monolingual system in use today. It is well known and well researched that the development of modern sciences¹ in the eighteenth century was accompanied by a transition from monolingual scientific communication conducted in scholarly Latin to a multilingual scientific landscape (Olschki 1919; Elsharif et al. 2024), which created a great need for translation between the European vernacular languages. This linguistic diversification, it is argued, was not a coincidence but was *constitutive* of the development of modern scholarship (Hahn 2000, 17–19; Ehlich 2006, 20). Research on the role of translation in the history of the sciences (e.g., Olohan and Salama-Carr 2014; Dietz 2016; Dupré 2018; Charlston 2020) also demonstrates the numerous productive effects that translation had during the “scientific Babel” (Gordin 2015), in other words in the “multilingual world” (Dupré 2018, 302), in which scholars have lived. With this research came the insight that the function of translation for scholarship is not limited to transporting an original work into another language. Rather, translation itself is considered part of “scientific practice” (Dietz 2016, 117), or part of “(scientific) life” (Dupré 2018, 302). The rise of English since the end of World War I (Gordin 2015, 159–163) and the perceived decline of translation in academia has led to con-

1. In this article, ‘science’ is used in the sense of the German ‘*Wissenschaft*’. The term not only refers to natural sciences, but also to social sciences, humanities, and academic philosophy.

cerns that this trend towards monolingual scholarly communication will also lead to an “epistemic monoculture” (Bennett 2015)² characterised by power imbalances due to linguistic and epistemic injustices (Catala 2022; Soler 2021).

There is no doubt that the shift from multilingualism to increasing monolingualism has been a central development in the scholarly system over the last hundred years. However, I argue that there is a second significant shift that needs to be examined: modern scholarship has the self-image of an international undertaking. This self-image imposes two demands on scholars. On the one hand, it demands that the ‘scholar as reader’ acquires all relevant scientific knowledge, regardless of when it was written, by whom, and in what language. On the other hand, it demands that the ‘scholar as author’ makes their findings available to and visible within the scientific community.³ In the eighteenth century, there appeared to have been an emphasis on the former. This is particularly evident when we look at the European academies of science, which were the central institutions of scientific research at the time. The archives of the *Académie Royale des Sciences* ‘Royal academy of sciences’ in Paris, for instance, contain many letters and texts sent to it by non-French scholars. These letters and texts were, however, not written in French, which was the official language of the Academy, or Latin, which all members of the Academy were proficient in at the time, but in the foreign scholars’ respective languages: German, Spanish, Italian, and English. Members of the Academy with language skills in the relevant language then translated the letters and texts into French (Elsherif 2025). Similar observations can be made about the Royal Society of London in England, and the newly established scientific journals such as the *Journal des Sçavans* ‘Journal of savants’ (De Sallo 1665, 156). At that time, therefore, it was mainly the ‘scholar as reader’ who was expected to carry out the necessary translation work in order to be able to read texts in different languages.

At present, however, the emphasis seems to be predominantly on the ‘scholar as author’ publishing in English (or, a few decades ago, in either English, French, or German) in order to ensure that their work can be read by a wide audience, rather than on the ‘scholar as reader’ trying to understand foreign-language texts.

2. Bennett recently relativised her arguments from 2015, emphasising that due to language contact “as a result of unprecedented migration and technological advances” (Bennett 2023, 516), academic language behaviour is imprinted today by a transnational paradigm.

3. This distinction between ‘scholar as reader’ and ‘scholar as author’ is similar to Stichweh’s observation that the readers of scientific journals are also regarded as their (potential) authors (Stichweh 1984, 427).

Hence, over time, there seems to have been a shift in responsibility from the ‘scholar as reader’ to the ‘scholar as author’.⁴

Although this article is not the ideal place in which to provide a full explanation of this change, I intend to highlight the implications of this change for research in Translation Studies: the increasing demand on scholars as authors to make their research comprehensible to the scientific community suggests that translation is one of several possible coping strategies for the author in scholarly communication. However, translation is often done *before* publication and not *after*, as Susam-Sarajeva (2002, 200) points out (see also Rozmysłowicz 2022, 128). Due to the traditional focus of Translation Studies being on published translations and on translations referred to *as* translations (Toury 1995), this “translationality” (Koskinen 2014) of the current academic system cannot be explained, and the translation processes which form part of authors’ coping strategies to address the urge to publish in the academic lingua franca(e) remain overlooked.

Viewing the scholarly author as ‘self-translator’ has promise as an analytical concept to capture these translational coping strategies. Used in this way, the understanding of ‘self-translator’ differs from the conventional meaning of the term. Usually, a self-translator refers to someone who translates a text they have previously written into another language (Cordingley 2022, 75). In this article, I use the analytical concept of a self-translator more broadly, encompassing all those efforts in which authors ‘take care of’ the translation of their texts themselves – be it in the form of self-translation in the conventional sense of the word, commissioning the translation of their manuscripts, or resorting to machine translation systems (see Bowker and Buitrago-Ciro 2019). From this perspective, not only books declared *as* translations are considered, but translation traces are also examined within the ‘original’ publications in various languages for smaller translation units, such as quotations, sentences, and terms (Heller 2019; Rozmysłowicz 2022, 28–29).

This perspective is explored in this article by analysing Hasan Hanafi as a self-translator; in other words by observing and analysing his academic migration to France, his change of language and self-translational efforts to adapt to the French academic tradition, and the influences of this (physical and linguistic) migration on his later philosophical texts in Arabic. Therefore, the focus of the following analysis of Hasan Hanafi’s philosophical work is not primarily on his

4. It is not my intention to give the impression that eighteenth-century scholars made no effort at all to ensure that their work was translated and published in the language(s) in which works were widely read within the scientific community. The efforts of Spallanzani to have his works translated into French (Gipper and Stefanelli 2021), as well as the cases discussed in Willer and Keller (2020) prove the opposite. Nevertheless, the historical tendency towards a shift in responsibility from the scholar as reader to the scholar as author is evident.

translations of Spinoza or Derrida, nor on his Arabic self-translations (in the conventional sense) of two books written previously in French (Hanafi 2013a, 2013b). Rather, traces of translation on the terminological level have been discovered in his French dissertation *Les méthodes d'exégèse* 'The methods of exegesis' (1965) and his book written in Arabic التراث والتجديد *At-turāt wa-t-tağdīd* 'Heritage and renewal' (2012 [1980]) (henceforth *Heritage and Renewal*).

2. *Heritage and Renewal: The philosophical project of Hasan Hanafi*

Hasan Hanafi (1935–2021) studied philosophy at Cairo University in the 1950s. As he describes in his autobiography (Hanafi 1989, 221–222), he felt very alienated by the subject matter of his studies and experienced an intellectual crisis in response to the state of Islamic philosophy. He was impressed by modernist and reformist authors such as Sayyid Qutb (whose narrow worldview he later began to question), Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani, and Muhammad Iqbal, whose works he read outside of the university while he had to learn rigid dogmas and theories unrelated to the reality and life of Muslims in the lectures he attended.

In his later philosophical work, Hanafi uses his experience of Islamic philosophy in crisis as an opportunity to reflect critically on the institutional deficits affecting contemporary Arabic-Islamic societies. One such deficit that he emphasises is the lack of freedom to develop independent rational thought (Hanafi 1988, 227). Against this background, Hanafi's great interest in the works of Spinoza, whose *Tractatus philosophicus-politicus* he translated into Arabic,⁵ is unsurprising. He shared with Spinoza the conviction that freedom of thought is not a danger to faith, but rather its foundation (Hanafi 2020 [1971], 19). He also agreed with Spinoza that reason was humans' only liberating power and that superstition was therefore an obstacle to their freedom. From this viewpoint, Hanafi problematises the long mystical tradition of Sufism in Islam. For Hanafi, the form of religion represented by Sufism, which historically had great significance especially in religious folk culture, is "a compilation of superstitions, hoaxes, and delusions" ("الصوفية، فهو مجموعة من الخرافات والخزعبلات والأوهام" *aṣ-ṣūfiyya, fa huwwa mağmū'a min al-ḥurāfāt wa-l-ḥuza'balāt wa-l-'auhām*) (20) that disregards the mind and is, thus, inherently corrupt. Hanafi wanted to reverse this dominance of the heart and emotions and the absence of the head and reason, thereby returning religion to the world of reason. This means that Hanafi sought to strengthen the rational approach to religion, following the example of the فلاسفة *falāsifa* 'philosophers.' This rational approach to religion is not to

5. On the Arabic translation of Spinoza, see Montada (2016).

be understood by analogy with the deistic traditions of the European Enlightenment. Rather, it resembles Lessing's *Christentum der Vernunft* 'Christianity of reason'.⁶

Related to this is a second tendency that Hanafi identifies as a deficit of Arabic-Islamic societies: an increasing alienation from their own heritage (تراث *turāt*). The preoccupation with heritage (*turāt*), or confrontation with one's own cultural past, has become an enduring theme among Arab thinkers since the Arab Renaissance in the nineteenth century (Hildebrandt 2007, 105–108). With the translation of Western forms of thought, a gap emerged between the traditional and the new, a distinction that is visible in Hanafi's work as well. The Arab discourse on *turāt*, which Hanafi follows in his texts, is thus characterised by the desire to maintain a connection to one's own cultural heritage (i.e., classical Islamic teachings), and the experience of becoming increasingly alienated from it.

In his book *Heritage and Renewal*, first published in 1980 (but cited below from the 2012 edition), Hanafi formulates a 'philosophical project' with which he wanted to counter the alienation of Muslims from their cultural heritage. With the formulation of this philosophical project, Hanafi joined the ranks of the اصحاب المشاريع *aṣḥābu-l-mašārī* 'initiators of projects': those Arab philosophers who see their task as working outside of the academic sphere and trying to bring about sociopolitical changes. The project was conceived as a triple reconfiguration of Muslims' attitudes (1) to their own Islamic heritage and (2) to Western heritage, in order to subsequently develop (3) an emancipatory agenda for a Muslim stance vis-à-vis present-day reality. It is primarily the second part of his project (i.e., the reconfiguration of Muslims' attitudes to Western heritage), and the concept of "occidentalism" that Hanafi formulated (Hanafi 2004c), that has received the most attention out of all of Hanafi's texts outside of Arabic-language discourse to date. In this article, however, the focus will be on the first part of his project, the part that concerns Muslims' attitudes to their own heritage.

Here, Hanafi intended to transform the classical disciplines handed down in Islamic culture into modern disciplines in which the central concern is no longer God but humankind.⁷ In his subsequent work, he therefore addresses the Islamic disciplines of علم اصول الدين *Ilm Uṣūl ad-Dīn* 'religious studies', فلسفة *falsafa* 'Islamic philosophy', علم اصول الفقه *Ilm Uṣūl al-Fiqh* 'Islamic jurisprudence', and علم التصوف *Ilm at-taṣawwuf* 'Islamic mysticism', in an attempt to delineate the function that they had in the social context of their emergence, and transpose

6. Hanafi's Arabic translation of Lessing's *Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts* 'The education of the human race' (1981) should also be considered in this context.

7. In this change of perspective from theology to anthropology (Hanafi 1972), Hanafi was also inspired by Ludwig Feuerbach and his work *Das Wesen des Christentums* 'The essence of Christianity' (1841).

them into a renewed Arabic language (Hanafi 2012, 176). This is because Hanafi was convinced that the problematic alienation of Muslims from their own heritage and their inability to connect with the teachings of the traditional Islamic disciplines was due to the archaic language in which this heritage was formulated. Hanafi therefore sought to achieve the renewal of the classical Islamic disciplines through a linguistic renewal of the Arabic language, convinced as he was that any process of modernisation needs to start with a linguistic renewal:

إن العلوم الأساسية في تراثنا القديم ما زالت تعبر عن نفسها بالألفاظ والمصطلحات التقليدية التي نشأت بها هذه العلوم والتي تقضي في الوقت نفسه على مضمونها ودلالاتها المستقلة والتي تمنع أيضاً إعادة فهمها وتطويرها. (...) هذه اللغة لم تَعُدْ قادرة على التعبير عن مضامينها المتجددة طبقاً لمتطلبات العصر نظراً لطول مصاحبته للمعاني التقليدية الشائعة التي تريد التخلص منها، ومهما أعطيناها معاني جديدة فإنها لن تؤدي غرضها لسيادة المعنى الغريبي الشائع على المعنى الاصطلاحي الجديد. ومن ثم أصبحت لغة عاجزة عن الأداء بمهمتها في التعبير والإيصال. (Hanafi 2012 [1980], 109–110)

‘inna-l-‘ulūm al-‘asāsiya fī turāt-i-nā al-qadīm mā zālat tu‘abbir ‘an nafsihā bi-l-‘alfāz wa-l-muštalahāt at-taqlīdiyya al-lati naša‘at bihā hāḍihi al-‘ulūm wa al-lati taqḍī fī-l-waqt nafsihā ‘ala maḍmūn-i-hā wa-dalālat-i-ha al-mustaqilla wa-l-lati tamna’ aiḍan ‘i‘ādat fahmihā wa-taṭwīr-i-hā. (...) hāḍihi-l-luġa lam ta‘udd qādira ‘la-t-ta‘bīr ‘an maḍāmīn-i-hā al-mutaḡaddada ṭibqan li-mutaṭallabat-il-‘aṣr naẓaran li-ṭūl muṣāhibat-i-hā li-l-mā‘āni at-taqlīdiyya aš-šā‘a al-lati turī at-taḡalluṣ min-hā, wa-mahmā aṭīnā-hā ma‘āni ḡadīda fa-‘innahā lan tu‘addi ḡaraḍa-hā li-siyyāda-t-al-ma‘na-l-‘urfī aš-šā‘i ‘la-l-mā‘na-l-iṣṭilāḥī-l-ḡadīd. Wamin ṭumma ‘aṣbahat luġa ‘āġiza ‘an al-‘adā’ bi-muhimmat-ai-hā fī-t-ta‘bīr wa-l-ṭīāl.

‘The seminal disciplines in our ancient heritage are still expressed in the traditional words and terms in which these sciences originated, which, simultaneously, eliminates their independent content and meaning and prevents them from being understood and developed anew. [...] This language is no longer able to express its renewed meanings⁸ according to the requirements of the times due to the duration of its association with the common traditional meanings that it tries to dispose of, and no matter to what extent we provide new meanings, the language will not fulfil its purpose due to the predominance of common customary meanings over new idiomatic meanings. It has thus become a language unable to perform its tasks of expression in communication.’⁹

8. As can be seen from this quote, Hanafi distinguishes between ‘new’ and ‘renewed’ meanings or contents. ‘Renewed’ here is meant to make clear that it is linked to something old. It is not something new and unprecedented but something renewed that has developed over time. Just as meanings have changed over time in response to sociopolitical circumstances, language needs to change accordingly in order to capture these renewed meanings.

9. Unless stated otherwise, the translations of all Arabic and French quotations into English are mine.

Hanafi's *Heritage and Renewal* project has received a great deal of attention in the fields of Islamic studies and Islamic philosophy in the West (see Hildebrandt 1998; Kersten 2008; Abd El Aal 2022; Kersten 2022), but the reception of his work has generally overlooked the fact that the formulation of this project was preceded by a process of translation that shaped his intellectual development.¹⁰ This process of translation can be traced throughout Hanafi's dissertation, which he wrote during his ten-year stay in France at Sorbonne University (1956–1966). In Section 3, I focus on Hanafi's 'French decade', discussing his struggles in adapting to the French scholarly tradition, analysing the terminological translations into French that Hanafi undertook in his French texts, and examining their back translation into Arabic in *Heritage and Renewal* (2012 [1980]).

3. Following Hanafi's path of academic migration: The 'French decade'

It can be assumed that Hanafi's decision to go to Sorbonne University to complete his doctorate was also motivated by strategic career reasons. Notably, many of the philosophers who occupy philosophical chairs at Arab universities today completed their doctorate in European countries or the US, including Mohamed Habib Marouki, Abdallah Laroui, Muhammad Arkoun, and Taha Abdurrahman at Sorbonne University; Hisam al-Alushi at Cambridge University; and Tayyeb Tizini at Humboldt University in Berlin. Going abroad to study for a doctorate is virtually a tradition in the Arab world.¹¹

The decade that Hanafi spent in France (1956–1966) was fundamental in shaping his academic profile, with classes taught by historians such as Robert Brunschvig and Henri Laoust, and philosophers such as Jean Wahl and Louis Massignon. He was particularly inspired by the Catholic philosopher Jean Guitton, with whom he developed a close personal relationship, and it is through the lens of Paul Ricœur's French translations that Hanafi read Edmund Husserl intensively and was taken with his phenomenological method. He also studied the rep-

10. One exception is Kersten (2022) who traces the origins of *Heritage and Renewal* back to Hanafi's doctoral studies at Sorbonne, although he does not focus on the translational aspect of Hanafi's project.

11. Cairo University is a good example. After Cairo University was founded in 1908 as the first modern university in the Arab world, most of the professors were Europeans, mostly from France, Italy, and England, teaching either in English or French on subjects unrelated to the Middle East, or in Arabic on Arab and Islamic subjects. Postgraduate students of all disciplines were systematically sent abroad to study for their doctorates, so that upon their return they could teach at Cairo University and thus gradually Egyptianise and (linguistically) Arabise the university (Reid 1990, 99–100).

representatives of the German Idealism movement, such as Kant, Fichte, Hegel, and most notably Lessing, in whose combination of religious belief and rational thinking he was interested. He was also intrigued by European philosophers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, especially Leibniz and Spinoza, with whom he shared the conviction that freedom is a fundamental condition for faith.

Hanafi's decade in France ended with the publication of a three-volume work, to which he later referred to as his "youthful French Trilogy" (Hanafi 2002, 320): (1) *Les Méthodes d'Exégèse: Essai sur La Science des Fondements de la Compréhension – "Ilm Usul al-Fiqh"* 'The methods of exegesis: Essay on the sciences on the grounds of comprehension – "Ilm Usul al-Fiqh"' (1965), (2) *L'exégèse de la phénoménologie* 'The exegesis of phenomenology' (1966a), and (3) *La phénoménologie de l'exégèse* 'The phenomenology of exegesis' (1966b). Hanafi's dissertation is the first of the three volumes.

All three parts can be read as relatively independent works, but all three grew out of the attempt "to make an Islamic reading of phenomenology and a phenomenological reading of Islam" (Hanafi 2002, 320). More than forty years after its publication in French, Hanafi produced an Arabic self-translation (in the general sense of the word) of the second and third parts of his 'French trilogy' (Hanafi 2013a, 2013b) and included them in the second part of his philosophical project formulated in *Heritage and Renewal* (2012 [1980]). An analysis of these two self-translations would also be a great fit for this special issue. However, the aim of this article, as already outlined in Section 1, is to focus on the cultural self-translation in the first volume, *Les méthodes d'exégèse*, of which Hanafi explicitly did not offer to produce a literal self-translation (Hanafi 2004a, 5).

The fundamental concepts of classical Islamic teachings, which Hanafi aimed to re-express during his later philosophical project, were already translated into French in *Les méthodes d'exégèse*. In this article, I address these terminological translations, but before doing so, I briefly discuss the difficulties that Hanafi experienced in writing his dissertation in France and in French, on which Hanafi himself reflects in the introduction to *Les méthodes d'exégèse*. These difficulties stemmed not only from the foreignness of the French language, in which he was not used to writing, but also from the French scientific tradition. It was "*l'étrangeté du milieu dans lequel le travail apparaît*" 'the unfamiliarity of the milieu in which the work was to be published' (Hanafi 1965, XIII), that made it necessary to revise his French trilogy several times. The first challenge that Hanafi had to overcome, he says, was to distance himself from the Arabic language. As he reflects in the following quote (in which he refers to himself in the third person), the first draft of the text, although written in French, closely resembled an Arabic text:

La phrase était presque une traduction plus ou moins de la phrase arabe. Elle avait sa structure, ses caractéristiques et ses tournures. Peut-être, le long attachement aux traités traditionnels a-t-il pillé à l'auteur son autonomie et son indépendance de style. [...] Donc, il fallait se débarrasser de l'emprise de la structure de la phrase arabe pour avoir la liberté d'expression. (XV–XVI)

‘The sentence was almost a translation, more or less, of the Arabic sentence. It had the same structure, characteristics and phrasing. Perhaps the long attachment to the traditional treatises robbed the author of his autonomy and stylistic independence. [...] Therefore, it was necessary to overcome the grip of the structure of the Arabic sentence in order to have freedom of expression.’

Interestingly, Hanafi attributes these challenges not to writing in a foreign language, but to his long classical Arabic education, which had robbed him of his ability to express himself freely, one he now had to work hard to reacquire.¹²

It was necessary not only to adapt the text to French stylistic norms since Hanafi describes the text as lacking “*de l'éloquence et de netteté*” ‘eloquence and clarity’ (XIV) but also because the virtually incomprehensible text did not fulfil its communicative function:

Le style était fermé. Chaque phrase était recroquevillée sur elle-même. D'accord, elle était comprise de l'auteur, mais elle était presque une énigme pour le lecteur. [...] Bien qu'elle [= la phrase] assumât sa fonction d'expression, elle manquait d'assumer sa mission de communication, comme si le travail été écrit pour son auteur! (XV)

‘The style was closed. Each sentence was curled up on itself. The author understood it, but it was almost an enigma for the reader. [...] Although the sentence assumed its function of expression, it failed to assume its mission of communication, as if the work was written for its author!’

The text thus had to be revised linguistically, stylistically, and structurally, with the help of a colleague more proficient in French (XIV).

However, the difficulties were not only on the linguistic level, but also appeared in the disciplinary classification of Hanafi's work. Hanafi's dissertation falls somewhere between the historical sciences, the history of philosophy, pure philosophy and theology and was supervised by professors from all these disciplines. As a result, the work is not considered to be appropriate in any of the disciplines in question. For historians, the work consists of too much philosophy and too little history; for philosophers, the opposite is true (XVI).

12. Hanafi's criticism of the stultifying effects of classical language education recalls Poullain de la Barre's (1674, 332–333) view, which presents classical Latin education as an obstacle to the development of one's own judgement, and learning Latin as a burden on common sense.

These difficulties can be partly explained by the (re-)development of (modern) philosophy in the Arab world in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and its establishment as a university discipline. The classical Arabic disciplines distinguish between *فلسفة falsafa* and *كلام kalām*. While *falsafa* refers to those Arabic and Persian philosophical currents that are based on the reception of Greek traditions of thought, *kalām* is one of the classical Islamic disciplines, often referred to as ‘theology’, in which Islamic beliefs are combined discursively with reasoned argument. In Arab countries, modern universities, founded in the twentieth century, include disciplines from the humanities and natural sciences in their curricula, but Islamic religious scholarship remains the responsibility of the institutions traditionally entrusted with this task (such as al-Azhar University). Therefore, unlike in Turkey (Hildebrandt 2007, 96–98), there is no discipline of modern theology established at universities that could modernise *kalām*. The tendency to modernise theological thought and critically examine *kalām* that nevertheless exists in the Arab world, is thus primarily to be found in the discipline of philosophy. The boundaries between *kalām* and *falsafa* are blurred in these philosophical disciplines, where both are encountered equally as forms of ‘philosophising’ or ordered and conceptually precise thought. Hence, within philosophy at Arab universities, there is a greater fusion of philosophy and theology, which is not found to the same extent in European university systems.

However, the fact that Hanafi’s dissertation is clearly classified as philosophical from an Arab perspective is connected with a second aspect: the concept of translation as a philosophical method that can be observed in the Arab tradition. Contemporary Arabic philosophy began, as Hanafi summarises, “with a triple mission: editions of texts, philosophical studies in different languages, and translations from Western philosophy” (Hanafi 1997, 1208). Many Arab philosophers describe the reception of philosophical currents, in the form of editions, translations, interpretations or commentaries, as creative work and thus as part of *falsafa* (e.g., Meskini 2008). Hanafi defines the function of *falsafa* as a critical examination of foreign cultures, an examination first fulfilled by translations (Hanafi 1965, 532–533). Therefore, there is a special relationship between philosophy and translation in the Arabic tradition, one that Hanafi expresses when he claims that philosophy has its beginnings in translation: “فالنقل بداية الفلسفة” *fa-naql-u-bidāyat al-falsafa* ‘translation/transfer¹³ is the beginning of philosophy’ (Hanafi

13. The Arabic word that Hanafi uses here for ‘translation’ is *نقل naql*. Literally translated into English, *naql* means ‘transfer’. Along with *ترجمة tarjama* ‘translation/re-expression’ and *تعريب ta’rib* ‘Arabisation’, *naql* is one of many Arabic words that express translation. In usage, however, frequently no distinction is made between the word’s underlying connotations of transfer and transformation. It would, therefore, be incorrect at this point to translate *naql* as ‘transfer’ and thus imply that Hanafi is deliberately resorting to a transfer-centred notion of translation here.

2021, 11). Hanafi's understanding of translation is not primarily based on the idea of transfer, but on that of appropriation and examination. The purpose of a translation, for him, is not to preserve an original, but always to meet the needs of the target system. Against this background, Hanafi cannot understand those who criticise the Greek–Arabic translations of the ninth and tenth centuries on the grounds that they distort the Greek original (see Hanafi 2021), since these critics fail to realise that the Greek–Arabic translators selected and translated these texts with the needs and interests of a particular time and place in mind. According to this understanding, translation is always creative work. The choice of texts to be translated alone is what makes a translator creative: "إنَّ اختيار نصوص بعينها" "للترجمة في حد ذاته تأليف غير مباشر، ويكون المترجم في هذه الحالة مؤلفاً بطري غير مباشر" *'inna iḥtiyār nuṣūs bi-īn-i-hā li-l-tarġaa fi ḥadd dātihi ta'lif ġair mubāšir, wa-yakūn al-mutarġim fi hādīhi al-ḥāla mu'allifan bi-ṭarīq ġair mubāšir* 'Choosing certain texts for translation is in itself an indirect authorship/creativity, and the translator in this case is an indirect author' (Hanafi 2020 [1971], 11).

Translation in this sense is seen (not just by Hanafi, but by many contemporary Arabic philosophers) as being an important part of philosophical work. The integration of translation into modern philosophical practice is evident not only in the fact that most contemporary Arab philosophers are also translators of important philosophical texts¹⁴ but also in the fact that in many Arab universities the study of philosophy includes not only the study of foreign languages (usually French and/or English) but also translation exercises. At the Lebanese University, for instance, two courses are scheduled in the third semester of study: *الترجمة والتعريب لنصوص فلسفية at-tarġama wa-t-ta'rib li-nuṣūs falsafiya* 'translation and Arabization of philosophical texts' (Oṭmān 2015, 152); likewise, at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of Tunis, starting from the fifth semester of the bachelor's degree, a course on *الترجمة الفلسفية at-tarġama al-falsafiya* 'philosophical translation' must be taken every semester (Mišbāḥ 2015, 397–401).¹⁵ As Hanafi's dissertation consists of a philosophical translation process, the study fits perfectly within the disciplinary boundaries of the Arab *falsafa*. It is this philo-

As can be seen from the context of this sentence, Hanafi is trying to use the Greek–Arabic translation movement of the classical period as an example to infer that translation processes often precede or accompany the development of philosophy.

14. Hanafi himself translated Spinoza (2020 [1971]); Sartre (2005) and Lessing (1981), and the Christian philosophers Augustine, Anselm of Canterbury, and Thomas Aquinas (see Hanafi 1978).

15. This integration of translation exercises into philosophy studies is also interesting in that it parallels the function of translation in the rhetorical tradition of Latin antiquity, when translation exercises were part of rhetorical studies (Copeland 1991, 34).

sophical process of translation in *Les méthodes d'exégèse*, as well as the back translations into Arabic in *Heritage and Renewal* that will be elaborated in Section 4.

4. Back and forth: Tracing terminological translations in *Méthodes d'exégèse* and *Heritage and Renewal*

In *Les méthodes d'exégèse*, Hanafi turns to the problem that he also addresses in his later philosophical project *Heritage and Renewal*: Muslims becoming increasingly alienated from their own cultural heritage. He also identifies the archaic Arabic language in which the Islamic heritage is formulated as the same main reason for this alienation. He identifies “*une stagnation constante du langage sans renouvellement réciproque*” ‘a constant stagnation of language without reciprocal renewal’ (Hanafi 1965, XCIX) in the Arabic language, which has buried the Islamic heritage in terminological archaisms. This, he argues, has led to a radical break in the Islamic culture and has hindered its modernisation.¹⁶

Hanafi, therefore, saw the necessity of ‘transposing’¹⁷ traditional Arabic-Islamic concepts into another language, one that “*ne donne pas uniquement des moyens d'expression, mais [...] ouvre aussi plusieurs aspects, différents domaines et une multitude d'horizons pour la pensée enfouie dans la terminologie [sic] ancienne*” ‘not only offers ways of expression [...] but also makes available numerous aspects, domains, and horizons for the thought locked in the old terminology’ (Hanafi 1965, XCIX), which he believed to have found not in Arabic but in French.

His choice of French seems to have been for pragmatic reasons: he was writing his thesis at a French university, where the use of the French was obligatory. What seemed important to Hanafi was that it was a *European* language that offered new terminology. According to Hanafi, a European language, because of its Greek roots, automatically invites rational, open, and free thinking and can thus help to liberate consciousness:

La terminologie sortante, suivant la trace de la terminologie grecque est rationnelle, ouverte, universelle, facile à comprendre et à utiliser, séduisante pour tout pensée libre, et aidant même à la liberté de conscience. (Hanafi 1965, XCVI)

16. Hanafi was by far not alone in being critical of the Arabic language and accusing it of stagnation and a lack of development. Another example is Ismā'il Mazhar (1891–1962), who described the Arabic language as one that had gone through a long period of stagnation and, for this reason, (no longer) met the requirements of the sciences and literature (Mazhar 2015 [1948], 10).

17. By ‘transposition’ he meant the expression of one culture (in this case, of the Arabic-Islamic culture) in the language of another culture (Hanafi 1965, XC).

‘The target terminology, following the traces of the Greek terminology, is rational, open, universal, easy to understand and use, attractive to any free thought, and even helpful for the liberation of the conscience.’

According to Hanafi, a successful transposition can lead to the modernisation, humanisation, and interconnection of the two cultures involved (CVI–CIX). He goes on to say that no project of modernisation and humanisation can succeed without transposition; in other words, without linguistic renewal. He therefore describes his dissertation as a manifesto of the Islamic modernist movement (XXV). Philosophical translation projects aimed at modernising or enriching one’s own culture are not unique to Hanafi’s work. Both Cicero and Schleiermacher call for translation *into* Latin and German as a means of cultural enrichment. With Hanafi, however, it is the opposite. He translates Arabic thought *out* of Arabic, and into another language in order to ‘liberate’ it from the archaic Arabic language.

According to Hanafi, a transposition concerns the level of term, meaning, as well as the thing itself. Accordingly, he distinguishes three possible ways of transposition, each of which emphasises one of these three aspects:

La transposition, [c’est] une prise en main de tous les aspects de la question: le terme, le sens et la chose dans les deux langues. Il existe donc trois manières de transposition ; la traduction du terme, l’expression de la notion et l’interprétation de la chose. (CXXI)

‘Transposition involves an understanding of all aspects of the issue: the term, the meaning, and the object in both languages. There are, therefore, three ways of transposition; the translation of the term, the expression of the meaning, and the interpretation of the object.’

In this tripartition of expression (*Ausdruck*), meaning (*Bedeutung*), and the thing itself (*die Sache selbst*), Hanafi largely adheres to Husserl’s conception of language, which the latter elaborates in *Logische Untersuchungen* ‘Logical investigations’ (2013 [1900]). He was therefore convinced that pre-linguistic experiences structure our *Lebenswelt* ‘life world’. It is into this pre-linguistic experience, the thing itself, that Hanafi wished to penetrate in his translations. The third mode of translation (i.e., the reinterpretation of the object), is therefore the one he preferred, although he admits that this is not always possible.

The transposition that Hanafi undertakes in *Les méthodes d’exégèse* involves not only a translation from Arabic into French, but also a translation of religious concepts into philosophical concepts. In his translations, Hanafi is, therefore, careful not to use French expressions with strong religious connotations (such as ‘God’, ‘prophet’, etc.). The results of this linguistic work are often unusual trans-

lations of theological concepts. For instance, rather than translating الله *Allah* as ‘God’, and قرآن *Qur’ān* as ‘The Holy Book’ he translates *Allah* as “conscience anonyme” and the *Qur’ān* as “expérience anonyme.” Likewise, he translates رسول *rasūl* (usually translated as ‘prophet’) as “conscience humaine privilégiée” and سنة *sunna* ‘traditions and practices of the prophet’ with “expérience privilégiée.” These translations are only understandable with reference to Husserl’s concept of intersubjective experience. In his *Cartésianische Meditationen* ‘Cartesian meditations’ (2012 [1931]), he states that objectivity is only possible through intersubjectively agreed experience. It is not only objects that prelinguistically structure our perception, but also other people. Experiences in the life world (*Lebenswelt*) are always intersubjective experiences. It is in distinguishing from this notion of intersubjective experience that Hanafi seeks to express the special status of God and the prophet.

Another notable translation is in the title of the book itself: *Essai sur La Science des Fondements de la Compréhension – “Ilm Usul al-Fiqh.”* *Ilm Uṣūl al-Fiqh*, (علم اصول الفقه) which is usually translated as ‘Islamic jurisprudence’, Hanafi literally translates as “*La Science des Fondements de la Compréhension*” ‘the science of the foundations of understanding’. The designation of *Uṣūl al-Fiqh* as ‘science’ (علم *Ilm*) already indicates Hanafi’s transformation of classical Islamic teachings into modern scholarship. With “*fondements de la compréhension*” ‘foundations of understanding’, Hanafi emphasises the hermeneutic roots of the discipline, which has established itself as the discipline concerned with the methodological principles of norm-finding, and positions it as a discipline concerned with the foundations of *understanding*,¹⁸ in other words, a discipline that seeks to understand the sources of revelation through *rational* methods and is therefore distinct from other methods of understanding revelation such as تصوف *Tasawwuf*, often translated as ‘mysticism’ but which Hanafi translates as “existential method” (Hanafi 1965, 509).

Hanafi remains aware of his multiple readerships throughout his translation work. He wrote his dissertation both for European readers and Islamic scholars. To address these two audiences, Hanafi often places the transcription of the Arabic word after his French translation. This also explains the inclusion of both translation and transliteration in the title of his dissertation. Therefore, Hanafi explains:

*‘Usul al-Fiqh’ peut-être traduit par la science des fondements de la compréhension.
[...] Cette traduction a été mise à l’intention du lecteur européen avant la translit-*

18. In this context, Hanafi, in line with Ricœur, explicitly distinguishes between knowledge (معرفة *ma’rifā*) and understanding (فهم *fahm*).

tération, pour éviter toute impression d'étrangeté du thème dont les lecteurs auraient pu avoir de la translittération. Certes, la traduction est nouvelle. Elle a été choisie car elle est d'une part une traduction exacte, d'autre part elle est séduisante pour le lecteur européen et lui donne tant de suggestions à propos de ces fondements de la compréhension. (Hanafi 1965, XXXVI)

'*Usul al-Fiqh* can be translated as the science of the foundations of understanding. [...] This translation is offered to the European reader before transliteration in order to avoid any impression of the theme's strangeness that the readers might have had from the transliteration. Certainly, the translation is new. This translation is chosen because it is, on the one hand, an accurate translation, and on the other hand it is attractive to the European reader and gives them numerous suggestions about these foundations of understanding.'

With these new translations of concepts from the Islamic tradition, Hanafi not only intended to liberate original meanings and therefore open Islamic culture to modernisation, but also to establish a new discourse in the West about Islamic culture. He deliberately avoids the use of already established translations of Arabic concepts, as these are already occupied by the Orientalist discourse, and the reader's impartiality is no longer guaranteed. The question of how to reach a reader that is free of prejudices about the subject of research is one that he addresses at length in his introduction: "*Comment le chercheur communique-t-il sa pensée aux autres? Comment peut-il arriver à éliminer tous les préjugés chez le lecteur sur l'objet de recherche?*" 'How can the scholar communicate his thoughts to others? How can he eliminate all of the reader's prejudices about the research object?' (LXXXVI).

Hanafi's new translations are, therefore, also an expression of his criticism of previously established translations, which he considered inadequate. One example is the Arabic term *إجماع* *Iǧmā'* which, after the Qur'an and Sunna, is the third source of law-making in Islam. *Iǧmā'* has so far mostly been translated as 'consensus'. However, Hanafi considered this translation to be incorrect, since it

... ne désigne du tout ni le contenu de cette source, ni sa fonction, ni son essence. Le terme 'consensus' est un terme stagnant et archaïque qui étouffe son contenu et qui empêche son apparition. (XCIX)

'... does not at all describe the content of its source, nor its function, nor its essence. The term "consensus" is a stagnant and archaic term that stifles its content and prevents its appearance.'

By contrast, the translation Hanafi chooses, "*expérience intersubjective*" 'intersubjective experience' (XCIX), allows for a new reflection on the meaning of the Arabic term. Unlike 'consensus', which implies that the opinion of the majority is

sought, “intersubjective experience” refers to a *common* experience achieved during the reciprocity of consciousnesses (C). In an analogy with Husserl’s concept of intersubjective experience, Hanafi shifts the focus from an external to an internal perspective.

An examination of Hanafi’s project of linguistic renewal in *Heritage and Renewal* reveals that many of Hanafi’s Arabic–French translations in *Les méthodes d’exégèse* have been back-translated into Arabic. Hanafi’s sensitivity to the communicative function of language, which he acquired during his experience of writing in French, seems to have strengthened his belief in a need for a renewal of the ‘old’ Arabic-Islamic language. Consequently, the main criticism that he levels at classical Arabic-Islamic terminology is its inability to fulfil the communicative function of language. This is particularly evident in his criticism of the expression الله *Allah* (Hanafi 2012 [1980], 112–116). The term *Allah* has, Hanafi argues, such a large conceptual scope and is loaded with so many different meanings depending on who is using it, that it no longer has *any* meaning (113). It was the inadequacy of this term to fulfil its communicative function that led Hanafi to seek a renewal of classical Arabic-Islamic terminology, adapted to the new historical circumstances of the present. Many of the renewed terms he then proposes are back translations of the terms translated into French in *Les méthodes d’exégèse*. For instance, Hanafi speaks of *Iǧmāʿ* as “التجربة المشتركة” *at-taǧruba al-muštaraka* ‘shared/mutual experience’ (Hanafi 2004b, 223), using the adverb مشترك *muštarak* ‘shared/mutual’ to emphasise the *intersubjectivity* of experience. Moreover, he speaks of أصول الفقه *Uṣūl al-Fiqh* as “منهج عقلي” *manhaǧʿ aqlī* ‘mental, reasonable or rationalistic method’ and of تصوّف *Ṭaṣawwuf* as “منهج وجداني” *manhaǧʿ wiǧḍānī* ‘affective or emotional method’ of understanding (Hanafi 2012 [1980], 185), thus emphasising the differences in the rational and emotional epistemic approaches. To put it another way, in *Heritage and Renewal*, Hanafi sought *intralingual* translations in order to adapt classical Arabic Islamic terminology to the new historical circumstances of the present. He achieved this *intralingual* translation by way of *interlingual* translations into French in *Les méthodes d’exégèse*.

5. Conclusion


The case of Hasan Hanafi allows us to observe translation processes under the changing linguistic conditions of the academic system. As I noted at the beginning of this article, the current language (and translation) ‘policies’ of the academic system are characterised not only by the increasing dominance of English as the language of scholarship, but also by an increasing focus placed on the scholar as

author in order to make their work understandable for other scholars, and thus to translate their work into dominant languages. Under such conditions, Translation Studies needs to not only pay attention to published translations marked *as* translations (only to find that published translations are becoming increasingly rare in the academic system), but also to look at traces of translation that either *precede* the publication of a text or are found in academic texts at a lower level of translation units (quotation, phrase, term). In this article, I attempted to find such traces of translation in Hasan Hanafi's works, deliberately *not* in the texts he labels 'translations' or 'self-translations,' but in those that appear as 'original texts.' An examination of Hanafi's translations at a terminological level shows that the (forced or voluntary) change to another language can be beneficial for academic (and in the case of Hanafi, philosophical) work and can be used productively in philosophical practice. The translation of key concepts of the Arabic-Islamic tradition into French, although prompted by his move to Paris for educational reasons, seems to have helped Hanafi to examine these concepts from a greater (linguistic) distance, to rethink these concepts, and to discover their foundational function, which he sought to preserve by translating them back into Arabic. It seems that the experience of writing philosophy in a foreign language sharpened his awareness of the communicative function of language and the need for a precise philosophical language, which encouraged him in his efforts to renew the Arabic language. Viewing Hasan Hanafi as a self-translator allows us to observe these terminological translations and reveal the influences of Hanafi's experiences of academic migration and 'self-translation' on his later work in philosophy.

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