

Manifesto Homeopático (Against Empiricism in Translation Studies)*

- Meaning cannot be extracted from the words that transport it and transferred wholesale to another vehicle. As Kwame Anthony Appiah said, “every sentence in which it can occur subtly shades the meaning of every word”. Like us, words are defined by the company they keep.
- If meaning is determined by environment, it cannot be studied in a detached manner. Like that owl, whose nocturnal behaviour flummoxes the zoologist, it cannot be caught and brought into the laboratory because it will not behave in the same way there. Let us find a way of observing meaning in the wild.
- For this we will have to put aside our Protestant repugnance at contaminations and natural biases. Fieldwork is a messy business. You get your hands dirty. We cannot be objective.
- Objectivity is a linguistic construct, manufactured to serve the empiricist agenda. It is a trick of the camera and needs special lighting.
- Objectivity objectifies. It makes living organisms into things to be dissected. Texts are *creatures* that breathe and interact. They are embodiments of human intentionality. They need to be treated with care else they wither and die. Vivisection is an inhumane practice and should be abolished.
- We need to find a way of studying meaning that is homeopathic and holistic, that respects otherness through empathy but does not deny our own engagement or pretend that our presence will not change things.
- We also need a homeopathic discourse to remedy epistemicide – one that is holistic, emotive and engaged, and which does not stand outside the text and look in but uses the texture of the text reflexively to generate new dimensions of meaning. *Homodiscursivity*. It has been done before by Jacques and Julia and others that rode their wave, but it has also been abused.
- The source of this homodiscursivity is language itself. Language is an organism that breathes and metabolizes, the product of the growth in collective human cognition.
- Saussure was wrong: linguistic signs are not arbitrary. Or rather they may be arbitrary a priori but they are not arbitrary a posteriori. Signs are made of other signs.
- We deal with things we don’t understand by mapping onto them things we do. All language is one big metaphor that is growing and expanding. Metaphor may therefore be the key to understanding texts.
- Meaning does not reside in individual words, it clusters in commonplaces. Understanding how commonplaces work is essential to knowing how we translate.
- There is no originality. All meaning is intertextual. Everything is translated.

[*The title is in Portuguese to evoke another manifesto with which this one has affinities, published in Brazil in 1928 by Oswald de Andrade.]