

## Lexical Difficulties in Translating Contemporary Spiritual Texts

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### Abstract

Translators of Mystical and corresponding types of spiritual discourse, e.g. Sufi texts, an overlooked area in translation studies--are bound to face several problems, including issues of moral ethical pre-translation one as well as lexical problems in the process of translation. The role of the translator in dealing with such texts goes beyond the inter-lingual equivalences of the messages to a deeper understanding and interpreting of their spiritual function. This paper surveys the first problem by showing that the translator faces an ethical and moral problem before he or she even begins translation. Then, through the analysis of two translations to Arabic of *Tolle's (2005) New Earth: Awakening to Life's Purpose*, the paper identifies the distinctive nature of spiritual language by highlighting the characteristic features of this style and providing some examples. Afterwards, the lexical difficulties that translators may encounter in rendering contemporary Mystical texts are analyzed. Four categories are identified: central concepts having no commonly-used equivalents in contemporary Arabic writings, newly-coined concepts, shared concepts with other fields of knowledge, and concepts borrowed from other religions. Examples are drawn from two available translations, Abu-Hawash's (2009) and Hussain's (2014) translations of Tolle's work into Arabic. The discussion provides an insight into the nature of spiritual texts and how they should be rendered. Translators need to mobilize all resources to help them reach the intended interpretation of each item by going deep into the core of such texts in order to render proper translation

*Key word:* lexical difficulty, mysticism, New Age movement rhetorical devices, spiritual texts, Sufism,

**Introduction:**

A series of panic attacks, striking as hard as nothing before, left me, Hamdan Al Hadjri, no option but to walk down the road of spirituality. The formidable walls of the obsessive thinking mind that had always managed successfully to drive invaders away from its fortress felt to me, one day, to have suffered a crack. I became anxious and unwell and looked to literature and the advice of spiritual masters for rebuilding of the self. The first two books that helped me greatly through my beginning steps on this path are *The Power of Now* (1999) and *New Earth: Awakening to Your Life's Purpose* (2005) by the German-born resident of Canada, Eckhart Tolle, listed in 2011 by the Watkins Review as "the most spiritually influential person in the world" ("Eckhart Tolle", n.d., para.1). Having been highly influenced by these two books and being trained as translator, it was my hope as a translator to convey this treasure of wisdom to the Arab world. However, it was not long before I found out that these books had already been translated into Arabic. My disappointment was greatly increased when I learned that those masterpieces, at least in my own view, have been poorly rendered into the Arabic. This, of course, does not apply to all such translations, an important exception being the one by Hawash (2009) of *New Earth*, published as a sub-project within the *Kalima* translation project, an initiative launched in 2007 by the Abu Dhabi Culture and Heritage Authority.

Faced by the grim reality of translation practice in this field, and the apparent lack of interest by translation researchers in exploring this area of knowledge, we found it important to bridge this gap between the theory and practice of translation in this field. Spiritual texts can be considered as spiritual guidance texts to help the reader to reach Love and Union with God. Thus they may be related in some sense to self-help texts as they assist in the journey toward self-realization and the purification of self. Such texts typically use techniques "endorsed and used by certain groups of people in a particular culture" (Sabry, R. 2012, p.15).

Spiritual discourse is not new as it goes back to early Muslim Sufis and Christian mystic movements. The term Spiritual discourse is often used to refer to those texts produced by practitioners or followers of different mystic traditions whether this comes under *Mysticism* in Christianity, *Kabbalah* in Judaism, or *Sufism* in Islam. Such texts reflect the state of union with God/Allah/Almighty or the Absolute and turning all senses, soul and heart to nothing but HIM. Such texts pose serious challenges to translators not only at the linguistic level, but also "at the ideational hurdles that need to be mediated between the source text producer and reader." (Piken, 2014, p.158). Unfortunately Spiritual texts have not received due attention in translation. With the exception of few studies, such as Pokon 2005 and Piken 2014, very little in the translation theory or practice has been dedicated to the discussion and translation of such texts. In fact, it can be considered as an untrodden or overlooked area.

The importance of this paper is that it covers a rarely-trodden area in translation aiming to direct more research to it as well as to argue for its inclusion into the context of spiritual discourse translation. Furthermore, the paper aims to provide insight to prospective translators of such texts. The paper unfolds in this order: first, the pre-translation ethical and moral problem translators of spiritual texts may face will be addressed and highlighted; second, the spiritual language of what may be included under a distinct style of expression (self-help discourse) is explored in terms of the characteristics and features that make it distinct from other styles of expression. Those characteristics have evolved as a result of the functions this language has

always been assigned to fulfill and the circumstances that surrounded its development throughout history. For the sake of this paper, the terms spirituality, mysticism and Sufism are used interchangeably to mean a similar thing but for different faiths. Third, the lexical difficulties that may face translators of contemporary spiritual texts will be analyzed based on Abu Hawash's (2009) and Hussain's (2014) translations into Arabic of Tolle's *New Earth: Awakening to Your Life's Purpose*, the bestselling book that sold more than 5 million copies in North America alone after 4 years from its first publication. This discussion will be corroborated by examples taken from these translations as the only two available translations of this work into Arabic. Finally, it is hoped to raise the translator's awareness of the importance of adopting a different approach in translating such texts.

### Pre-translation dilemma

Originators/authors of Mystical texts often load them with signs, codes, symbols, and what may be called "internal spiritual linguistic interactions" reflecting their deep involvement in the expression of their spiritual relation with the creator, dominator, super-power: Allah/God. In the process, these authors seek humiliation, torture and suffering for ultimate purification. The irony and paradox here as Pokorn (2005:101) believes is that the translator who is trying to propagate the content of these texts is seen as betraying the author by revealing the 'secret of secrets' in one sense and by exposing him/her to outsiders which often attracts social scorn, criticism, or even ridicule. In talking about the translation of a 14<sup>th</sup> century work, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, Pokorn (2005) states that

when the present day translator of THE BOOK, enables the book to reach readership in other ages and in different cultures, he or she exposes Margary to their scorn and thus provides her with the humiliation she needs for purification (p.101).

To spiritualists, this is a work of salvation and redemption. The paradox here is that even though the translators are betraying the authors who want their works to be secret and not publicized, they are doing these authors a favor by spreading and perpetuating their torture and suffering which ultimately purifies them and leads to their salvation.

It is preferable among such authors to keep their writings secret if they do not guarantee that either their followers or those true believers will understand them. In talking about the translation of another 14<sup>th</sup> century mystical text, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, which was translated to several languages from English, Pokorn (2005) reiterates the "entreaty" authors usually begin their works:

I charge and beg you with the strength and power that love can bring to bear, that whoever you may be who possess this book (perhaps you own it, or are keeping it, carrying it, or borrowing it) you should, quite freely and of set purpose, neither read, write or mention it to anyone, nor allow it to be read, written or mentioned by anyone unless that person is in your judgement really and wholly determined to follow Christ perfectly. And to follow him not only in the active life, but to the utmost height of the contemplative life that is possible for a perfect soul in a mortal body to attain the grace of God. (The Cloud 1978:51 –cited in Pokorn 2005:102).

This contemplative spiritual drive reminds us of one of the basic principles of Sufism among Early Muslim Sufis who consider their works (books, texts, prayers, etc.) their own property, not to be revealed to out-group members. Failure to keep the secret may result in out-casting the one who betrays, as happened for example with Al-Hallaj, one of the most well-known Muslim Sufis in the 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> Hijri century.

Accordingly, will the translator of these mystical or Sufi spiritual texts be considered betrayers? The dilemma for the translator, in such a circumstance, is whether to be loyal to the author or to the readers, or the text itself. Nord (1997) states that translators should be loyal not only to the author of the source text by making their translation compatible with the author's intentions, but also should have a moral obligation towards the reader as well.

Pokon (2005) adds that another task of the translator is to be loyal to the text itself, especially the ones which do not belong to the cultural norms, domains, or historical stage of the target language. "The text must be kept alive by enlarging the potential readership." (p.103) So, by translating these spiritual texts, the translators help in spreading and repeating them and thus keep them alive. Paradoxically, according to Pokorn (2005):

They partially unburden themselves of the responsibility and at the same time widen the scope of prohibition [of not to reveal the work] as it reaches readerships not only in the source language but also in the target language (102).

In such cases, to justify his or her act, the translator may refer to a working post-structural principle in translation, which stipulates that once a work is published, the author loses possession and power over his/her work. Pokorn (2005) states that then "the original and the translation are thus granted new and independent lives that are not defined by their environment and their creators" (p.103). This will free the translator of both moral obligation and ethical responsibility.

Yet, some translators try to avoid or refrain from translating such texts as they believe they will not be able to convey the intended the authors' meaning or message accurately. In an interview with Ghassan Hamdan, a well-known Iraqi writer and translator, conducted in (2015) by Khaled Abdo, he was asked why he avoids translating Sufi texts. He stated that he fears that he will be unfair to the great Sufi writers as he will not be able to convey their psychological and spiritual insights, the beauty of their language, sensitiveness, and delicateness when translating their works.

This is the translator's dilemma at the moral and ethical level. However the more serious dilemma facing the translator of such texts in the process of translation itself is a semantic and lexical one. The difficulty results from the multi-level understanding of the lexical items and the texts: What the translator needs to know about the translation of spiritual texts is not only the normal meaning but also the inner reference and the interpretation. This will be dealt with in the following section.

### **Spiritual Language: Characteristics and Features**

What makes a language used in a certain field of knowledge different from another can be attributed to many factors, including but not limited to, the differences in the functions it assumes, the purposes it achieves, the audience it addresses, the mode it takes, and the context in

which it arises. These are all sufficient reasons to allow the emergence of different languages or styles of expression that make communication possible, each in its own field. But how much different a language can be when it is mobilized to transcend the phenomenal plane and cope with the challenges of the nominal. All these factors have given rise to a language unique in many aspects in spiritual texts.

In spiritual texts, whether Mystic, Sufi or otherwise, language is considered symbolic, metaphorical with multi-layered implications or significances at the same time, subject/liable to multi-faceted interpretations with profound allegory, imagination, representations, and metaphorical loads and pictures. Rather than being a system of signifiers for thought, ideas, philosophy or politics, language for spiritualists is a system of codes, metaphors, symbols, signs, significances, and configurations which differ totally from those in literature, philosophy, politics and the like. With its structure, format, and existence, spiritual language represents a specialized context with its own lexicon and structure where every single lexeme has its own significance and implication and every structure or clause represents a piece of evidence or argument. Thus, comprehending a spiritual text is unattainable without proper spiritual analysis of the word as well as the sentence by referring to the individual spiritual experience. Language in such a case is a reflection of the spiritualist's world of imagination and special relation with Allah as it has been originated, formulated and constructed from his own perspective after a process of spiritual readiness, acceptance, and special practice. The text here is not built according to a pre-plan, mental efforts and regular thematic development procedures; rather it is metaphysical, going beyond the mind to the inner self/spirit, a reflection of the depth of human psychology and experience. Accordingly, for the translator to fully comprehend the spiritual dimension of the text and to render it properly, he must not only know linguistic equivalences, but must have had a similar spiritual experience. The linguistic item does not derive its significance/meaning from its regular reference as it does not often represent the "signifier and the signified." The items go beyond the scope of the human mind to the spiritual-cultural relation with the super power (Allah or God).

This represents a major problem to the standard translator who is not necessarily a Sufi or mystic. The translator here has to distinguish between the spiritual experience and expression of it. Translating it means transferring it from the spiritual to the physical, from depths of self to the linguist materialist world, which may disrupt the whole picture. It is a return from the depth to the horizon while at the same time trying to be loyal by maintaining compatibility. Paradoxically, for the spiritualist to express himself he needs a language, which is ultimately material. If there hadn't been compatibility between the spiritual experience and expression of such experience, a special language would have come into existence to represent spiritual experiences in a certain linguistic form or framework. If spiritual experience existed beyond linguistic expression, it would not be possible to write or read about it.

In spiritual language, strange constructions abound that might seem ungrammatical at first. This apparent ungrammaticality sometimes increases ambiguity rather than dispelling it. A good example for such obscure constructions that prevail in contemporary spiritual writings is the following:

- "If I can feel the I Am so strongly, then who I am hasn't been diminished at all." (Tolle, 2005, p.40 )

- "The 'I' of the statement is never the Real I" (Shunyamurti, 2008, p. 70)

These seemingly ungrammatical structures might affect translation if the translator is not aware enough to infer the intended meaning of the source text expression.

In addition, the lexical repertoire of spiritual language is rich. This can be seen as a natural consequence of the mystical experience. When one reaches out to the absolute, attempting as hard as he can to describe the indescribable and express the inexpressible, he mobilizes all the tools language can provide him with. He might, in fact, coin new terminology and lexis only to make ends meet. This is not a new trend in spirituality, but an old one as can be seen in excerpts 1 and 2 taken from one of the poems by the well-known Muslim mystic Mansur al-Hallaj (c. 858 – March 26, 922):

1. بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكَ إِنِّي يُزَاجِمُنِي

"فَارْفَعُ بِأَنَّكَ إِنِّي مِنَ الْبَيْنِ" (Al-Hallaj, 2007)

"Between you and me is an I-ness interfering with me Take away then with your I-ness my I-ness from between us!" ( cited in Mustafa, 2012)"

2. "رَأَيْتُ رَبِّي بِعَيْنِ قَلْبِي فَكُلْتُ مَنْ أَنْتَ قَالَ أَنْتَ  
فَلَيْسَ لِأَيْنٍ مِنْكَ أَيْنٌ وَلَيْسَ أَيْنٌ بِحَيْثُ أَنْتَ" (Al-Hallaj, 2007)

"I saw my Lord with the eye of my heart

I said: 'who are you?' He said: 'You!'

But for You, 'where' cannot have a place

And there is no 'where' when it concerns You."

Here, the first person singular pronoun 'I' is used to invent a new word (I-ness) and the preposition 'where' is upgraded to a noun, a move that can be seen as a violation of all normal grammatical rules at that time.

According to Ernst (1992), a specialist in Islamic studies and an author of many works on Sufism, Arabic grammar is one of the sources of Sufi terminology. This can be clearly seen in example (1) where the first person singular pronoun أَنَا is turned into a new word (إِنِّي) and used as an initiator of action in the phrase إِنِّي يُزَاجِمُنِي. Other sources of Sufi terminology, as Ernest (1992) suggested, include Islamic sciences, theology and vocabulary of Hellenistic sciences. In contemporary writings, the adverb 'now' is constantly used as a key concept in spiritual teachings, as can be observed in this statement: "You will enter the NOW beyond past and future" (Harding, 2008, p.22). Key lexical items in spiritual texts are usually read and interpreted very differently from their regular and everyday use. The word "hungry" for instance which refers to the material need for food if used literally and to the great need for other needs if used metaphorically. However, for spiritualists, it does not refer to any of these but is a sublime and elevated way to reach supreme power and total annihilation, sublimation and transcendence.

Beside the richness in lexicon, the presence of rhetorical devices is strongly felt in spiritual writings. Flowery language, imagery, alliteration, metaphor, contrast, repetition, and

parallelism are examples of rhetorical devices that appear in spiritual texts. The following quotation from the English version of the *Tao Te Ching*, a classic sixth century BC Chinese text by the sage Lao Tzu, uses some of the above rhetorical devices:

"Men are born soft and supple;  
dead, they are stiff and hard.  
Plants are born tender and pliant;  
dead, they are brittle and dry.

Thus whoever is stiff and inflexible  
is a disciple of death.  
Whoever is soft and yielding  
is a disciple of life.

The hard and stiff will be broken.  
The soft and supple will prevail." (Lao Tzu, 1988, ch.76).

Apart from that, spiritual language is characterized by its power to induce breakthroughs in the consciousness of the disciple when it is used nonsensically (Katz, 1992). In Zen, a disciple is supposed to meditate on a *kōan*, a paradoxical riddle, such as "what is the sound of one hand clapping?", until some degree of insight or enlightenment is achieved (King, n.d., para.1). These *kōans* were developed to demonstrate the inadequacy of logical reasoning in gaining intuitive enlightenment. This use of language in initiating breakthroughs in consciousness can be compared to the practice of *dhikr* (recollection of the Divine Names) in Sufism. The purpose of this practice is not to "impart propositional knowledge [...] but to spiritualize the reciter" (Katz, 1992, p.13). A language, developed to fulfill such purposes, might prove problematic in translation especially when it hinges on an illogical play of words.

Another distinctive feature of spiritual language is in being a language of a secretive nature. Ernst (1992) states that the terminology used by Sufis might conceal meaning as much as they might display. This ascribes to their intention to facilitate understanding among Sufis and frustrate it for outsiders. And if a translator happens to be an outsider, understanding might be beyond his reach. Thus, it is of paramount significance that a translator does not feel content with the surface meaning of an expression and penetrates into the core.

In addition to what has been said, language as a tool for facilitating communication is regarded as insufficient to fulfill the needs of the task when it is the spiritual experience being communicated. It is fair to say that almost all traditions of mysticism and Sufism unanimously agree to this statement. To them, there is no way to encompass the unlimited (Divine greatness) by the means of the limited (language). A language is no more than a pointer to the sacred, and in no way it can be the sacred itself. Thus, faced by this unbridgeable gulf between experience and utterance, the master "uses a language he or she knows to be necessarily inferior, hopelessly inadequate to the descriptive task at hand" (Katz, S. 1992:3). The majority of mystics maintain that their experience is fundamentally ineffable, i.e. it cannot be adequately expressed (Picken, 2014, p 156). Then if the language the mystic uses falls short of fulfilling the task at hand, translating that into another language will definitely make the situation worse.

Lastly and most importantly is the inaccessibility of spiritual language to the mind without the engagement of the heart. To mystics and Sufis, the (metaphysical) heart is the source of all knowing and not the mind as what most people would like to think. It is only by transcending the mind and all its defense mechanisms that a person can arrive on the shores of Divine truth and begin to understand what mystics attest to. This means that the content of a spiritual text can only reveal itself to a specialist or at least, to some extent, someone interested in the field.

The above discussion of the characteristics or idiosyncrasies of spiritual texts can offer a glimpse into the potential difficulties that might get in the way of producing a good translation of such texts. In the following section, we will be focusing only on the lexical difficulties that might be encountered in the translation of contemporary spiritual texts. The data used in this part is collected from Tolle's *New Earth: Awakening to your life's purpose*, and the two available translations of the work: Abu-Hawash's (2009) and Hussain's (2014).

### **Lexical Difficulties in translating contemporary Spiritual Texts: Tolle's *New Earth: Awakening to Your Life's Purpose* as a case study:**

The lexical difficulties faced by translators of contemporary mystic texts and in particular Tolle's *New Earth: Awakening to Life's Purpose* can be grouped into four categories:

A- Central concepts that have no commonly used equivalents in contemporary Arabic.

B- Concepts shared with other fields of knowledge.

C- Newly coined concepts.

D- Borrowed concepts from other religions.

Due to the nature of problems that each of these categories might pose and the solutions that need to be sought as a result, each category must be discussed separately.

A- Central concepts that have no commonly used equivalents in contemporary Arabic writings. Concepts such as the *manifested* and the *un-manifested*, the *form* and the *formless*, *thingness* and *nothingness*, *awakening*, *enlightenment*, *non-identification*, *detachment*, *duality*, and *oneness* are some of the basic concepts that almost no spiritual book in today's world might be without. However, given the scarcity of writings in this field by contemporary Arab writers and the vilification exercised by many religious figures on Sufism or spirituality, the spiritual lexicon in Arabic language has greatly shrunk, at least in the minds of people if not in some rare writings. One solution a translator of such texts might opt for is to resort to the Sufism literature in Islam and bring to life some of the lexicons that might work as proper equivalents for such concepts.

Table one shows two excerpts from Tolle's book where some of the above-mentioned concepts appear and how they are rendered in both translations. The last column of the table shows the researchers' attempt in light of the recommendation given above.

Table 1: Translation of two excerpts from Tolle's book

Source text	Target text 1	Target text 2	Researchers' Attempt
"The coming into manifestation of the world as well as its return to the un-manifested – its expansion and contraction – are two universal movements that we could call the outgoing and the return home" (Tolle, 2005, p.282).	"إن الوصول إلى إظهار العالم، ثم العودة إلى عدم إظهاره – تمده وتقلصه – هما حركتان كونيتان يمكن أن نسميهما الوطن الراحل" ، والعائد ( Hussain 2014,p.215 )	"إن تشكل العالم ثم عودته إلى حال اللامتشكل (اللامنظور) – أي تمده وانكماشه – هما حركتان كونيتان يمكننا تسميتهما الخروج والعودة إلى الدار." (Abu- Hawash, 2009, p.243)	"إن ظهور العالم إلى حيز الوجود وعودته إلى العدم، أو بعبارة أخرى تمده وتقلصه، حركتان كونيتان يمكن أن نطلق عليهما حركتي الخروج والعودة إلى الأصل." Authors' translation
"That “empty space” is life in its fullness, the unmanifested Source out of which all manifestation flows. The traditional word for that Source is God." (Tolle, 2005, p.251).	"ذاك "الفضاء الفارغ" هو الحياة بملئها، هو المصدر غير المكشوف الذي تأتي منه كل الأشياء المثبتة، والكلمة التقليدية التي تدل على ذلك المصدر هي "الله" (Hussain 2014, p.191)	"هذا "الفضاء الشاغر" هو الحياة بامتلائها، "المصدر" غير المتمظهر الذي تتدفق منه كل التظاهرات. والكلمة التقليدية التي تصف هذا "المصدر" هي الرب. (Abu-Hawash, 2009, p.218)	"ذلك "الفضاء الفارغ" هو الحياة بملئها، هو اللامتجلي الذي تتجلي عنه سائر الأشياء. والكلمة التقليدية التي تستخدم للتعبير عن مصدر الحياة هذا هو "الله"." Authors' translation

In both excerpts, Hussain (2014) fails to communicate the right message. In the first, he downgrades the status of the world from a subject into an object; hence a different notion is introduced. In the second, the unsuccessful addition of the word *المثبتة* distorts the intended meaning and flings the door wide open for erroneous interpretations. On the other hand, Abu-Hawash (2009) succeeds in conveying the right message in both excerpts without having to change so much in the structure of the ST. However, we think that in opting for choices such as *الوجود والعدم* and *اللامتجلي*, the right message is conveyed and naturalness of expression is achieved. They accord better with the lexical tradition of Sufi literature in Islam.

B- Shared Concepts: This category represents the concepts that spirituality or Mysticism shares with other fields of knowledge, such as psychology, philosophy and sociology. However, in spirituality these concepts are used in wider terms than they seem to mean in other fields or they are used to mean something altogether different. Concepts such as *consciousness*, *being*, *awareness*, *the Self*, *ego*, *atonement*, and *redemption*. are examples of such concepts in modern spirituality.

Though the concepts *consciousness*, *awareness*, *source*, and *being* might mean something different in psychology or philosophy, they are frequently used in spiritual writings, sometimes with their initials in uppercase, to refer to God or the source of all life. The following two excerpts from Tolle's *New Earth* illustrate this point:

- a. "Consciousness is already conscious. It is the un-manifested, the eternal [...] Consciousness itself is timeless and therefore does not evolve. It was never born and does not die" (Tolle, 2005, p.291).
- b. "Just as space enables all things to exist and just as without silence there could be no sound, you would not exist without the vital formless dimension that is the essence of who you are. We could say "God" if the word had not been so misused. I prefer to call it Being. Being is prior to existence" (Tolle, 2005, p.220).

Though all these words are used to mean the source of life, each highlights a certain aspect of this Source. By consciousness, this Source is looked at as all-conscious. By Being, it is thought of as ever-existent. This can be compared to the 99 Divine Names ascribed to Allah in Islam. For example, the Divine names Al-Qayyum (the Self-Existing by whom all subsist) and Al-Khabir (the all-aware) might mean something similar to Consciousness and Being.

In excerpt (a), both translators rendered consciousness as الواعي, which, in our view, might give rise to some ambiguities. This translation draws no line between the normal use of this word in psychology or philosophy and what it means in spirituality. Thus, we think consciousness should have been modified and translated as الواعي الأسمى or الواعي الفائق and between brackets additional information such as جوهراً هذا الوجود could also be added. As for the passage (b), a translation void arises as most bilingual dictionaries provide no more than كينونة or وجود as meanings for being and existence and both translators rendered them as such. Though there is nothing wrong with such an interpretation, we believe options such as الوجود الأزلي and الوجود الحادث give a clearer idea as to what these terms mean in this context.

C- Newly-coined Concepts: Mystics have always been known for their revolutionary attitude toward predominant societal norms and rules. One manifestation of this revolutionary attitude can be observed in the use of language, either in speaking or writing. Mystics are highly experimental and flexible in inventing new concepts and terminology, and contemporary spirituality is no exception. It seems as if language, in its current form and use, fails greatly to fulfill the basic requirements. Some new concepts (represented in newly coined lexical items) used in Tolle's book are: *the now*, *suchness*, *isness*, *the I-Amness*, *pain-body*, *inner-space*, *space consciousness*, *inner body*, and *the I-thought*.

The word *suchness*, as example, proves somewhat elusive to translate. The following excerpt gives an indication as to what it might mean:

"The ego loves its resentment of reality. What is reality? Whatever is. Buddha called it tatata – the suchness of life, which is no more than the suchness of this moment". (Tolle, 2005, p.115 )

The translational problem that this concept poses is that even if a translator manages to unpack the meaning of the concept, finding a proper equivalent for it in the target language might be challenging. Almost no dictionary, of the ones we usually have at our disposal in the Arab world, might come to rescue in this situation. The translations given by the two translators for this part go like this:

"تستسيع "الأنا" امتعاضها من الواقع. ما هو الواقع؟ كل ما هو كائن. بوذا أسماء "تاتا تاتا، أي راهنية الحياة"، الذي لا يدعو - واقع هذه اللحظة" كونه (Abu-Hawash, 2009, p.177)

- "الأنا تحب استنباها من الواقع. ما هو الواقع؟ مهما يكن الواقع، فقد أسماه بودا "تاتاتا" أي "مثلية الحياة". التي هي لا شيء - (Hussain, 2014, p. 92) أكثر من كونها مثلية هذه اللحظة."

In the entry "Tathatā" on Wikipedia, the concept is variously translated as 'thusness' or 'suchness' and since "no moment is exactly the same, each one can be savored for what occurs at that precise time, whether it is thought of as being good or bad" ("Tathatā", n.d., para.1). With this meaning in mind, Abu-Hawash's rendering of the concept as راهنيه , in our view, resonates better with the context in which the word appears in the source text than مثلية which could actually connote the opposite. It is to this extent a mistranslation of a single word might transmit a totally different message than the intended one. One more option that can be suggested here is the synonym آنيّة so that the phrase 'the suchness of life' can be rendered as آنيّة أو راهنيه الحياة in case one word was not enough to clarify the concept.

D- Borrowed concepts from other religions: Modern day spirituality or the New Age movement in the West thrives on the teachings of Eastern religions such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Confucianism, Taoism, and Zen. These religions, or styles of living, have found their way into the West through the works of those eastern spiritual masters who moved to the West or those westerners who abandoned their homeland to practice spirituality at the hands of mystics in the east and then returned home to spread the word. This has resulted in many words being borrowed into English from the languages through which those religions were communicated, such as Sanskrit, Hindi, and Chinese. Karma, Satori, Dukkha, Maya, Atman, Tao, Anata, Tatata, Brahman, Zen...etc. are some of the loan words Tolle uses in his book. Tolle does not assume readers have any prior knowledge of such words. Luckily, it does not leave any of these concepts without explaining them. This is understandable given that Tolle's book, as stated in its beginning, addresses those who have experienced a glimpse of awakening as well as those who are totally new to enlightenment. Had the author opted not to explain those loan words, the translator of this work would have encountered a tremendous task in both decoding and encoding them in the target language. In a story the author tells about a Zen master who answers a disciple's question about enlightenment, the word 'satori' comes up in this expositional context, "The disciple was stunned. It was his first satori – a flash of enlightenment. He knew what Zen was without knowing what it was that he knew!" (Tolle, 2005, p.237). On almost all occasions where such loan concepts are used, an explanation is provided. However, this, unfortunately, did not prevent detrimental mistakes from occurring as can be seen in one of the translations below.

- "ذهل التلميذ. كانت تلك أول ساتوري – ومضة تنوير- له. عرف ماهية الزن، من دون أن يعرف ما الذي قد عرفه". (Abu-Hawash, 2009, p.207)

- "كان التابع مذهولاً فقد كانت أول تجربة بالنسبة إليه. وميضاً من التنوير. وعرف أن "زين"، هي المعنى الذي يأتي دون معرفتك بالشيء الذي تبحث عنه". (Hussain, 2014, p.182)

As can be seen, Hussain (2014) does not only drop the concept altogether in his translation, but also he mistranslates the intended message. Such mistakes in translating borrowed concepts are recurrent in Hussain's translation. These serious mistakes can be taken as a lack of professionalism or even seriousness on the part of both translator and publisher. Having said this, Abu-Hawash's translation could have also been better had he not kept a close distance to the ST's syntactic structure. His translation may sound more natural in the target language with this slight modification:

- ذُهِل التلميذ، فقد كانت تلك أول ومضة تنوير له، أو أول "ساتوري" كما يطلق عليها في بوزية الزن. عرف الزن، من دون أن يعرف ما الذي قد عرفه.

It is clear then that in translating spiritual discourse, translators face difficulty at all lexical levels to varying degree. Accordingly, they have to resort not only to the different traditional translation strategies and techniques but also to new ones to render them properly. In the case of central concepts, perhaps archaic-seeming as they may not have equivalents in contemporary Arabic, the translator may resort to older Islamic Sufism literature to familiarize him/herself with such concepts.

When dealing with shared concepts, the translator may be tempted to render such terms in their normal contexts as done in other fields, thus failing to give the proper intended content/significance of the term. In such cases, the translator has to make a distinction between the normal use of this word in other fields, such as psychology or philosophy and what it means in spirituality. However, translators may encounter more challenging tasks in the translations of newly coined concepts and borrowed concepts from other religions. In both cases, even if the translator manages to unpack the meaning of the concept, finding a proper spiritual equivalent for it in the target language might be a bit challenging. Dictionaries offer little if any help in this regard. All will depend on the experience of the translator and his/her emersion in spiritual life. We can then assume that this requires a special translator who is into spiritualism just like the case of poetry where the best translator of poetry is a poet.

### Conclusion:

In this paper, we endeavored to shed light on an area that is nearly overlooked in translation studies: the translation of spiritual texts. In the first part of the paper, the pre-translation moral and ethical dilemma facing the translator of spiritual texts was discussed. It was shown that translators of mystical texts may breach the loyalty to the author "which is, paradoxically, caused by loyalty to the text and its potential readership" (Pokon, 1005, p. 104). Then we highlighted the uniqueness of spiritual language by explaining what makes it distinctive from other types of languages, by identifying the features that characterize this style of expression and providing some examples where applicable. We know, for example, that spiritual language is symbolic and metaphorical with multi-layered implications, uses strange constructions that may seem ungrammatical at first glance, has rich lexical repertoire, uses rhetorical devices, has power to induce breakthroughs in the consciousness of the disciple when it is nonsensical, of a secretive nature, is seen as insufficient to fulfill the spiritualist's communication needs, and is inaccessible to the mind without the engagement of the heart. In the third, major section of this paper, the lexical difficulties that may be encountered in rendering contemporary spiritual texts such as Eckhart Tolle's *New Earth: Awakening to Life's Purpose* were analyzed. These difficulties are divided into four categories: central concepts that have no commonly-used equivalents in contemporary Arabic writings, newly-coined concepts, shared concepts with other fields of knowledge, and lastly, concepts borrowed from other religions. These difficulties are corroborated by examples from the only two available translations of this work into Arabic: Abu Hawash's (2009) and Hussain's (2014). The discussion of examples taken from both translations provides an insight into the exceptional nature of spiritual texts and how they should be approached with utmost caution to prevent any potential ambiguities from arising. In a nutshell, as important as is the need of translation studies to explore this field of knowledge in depth given the rising popularity of these texts, equally vital is the need of translators to

mobilize all available resources to help them permeate the core of such texts and not suffice with superficial interpretations. More research is needed to investigate other areas of difficulty in such type of discourse, e.g. structural and discursal ones.

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