The Routledge Handbook of Translation Theory and Concepts

Edited by Reine Meylaerts and Kobus Marais

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This is the first handbook to focus on translation theory, based on an innovative and expanded definition of translation and on the newest perspectives in the field of Translation Studies.

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The Routledge Handbook of Translation Theory and Concepts is both an essential reference guide for advanced students, researchers and scholars in translation and interpreting studies, and it is an enlightening guide to future developments in the field.

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(Palgrave Macmillan 2010), *Media Transformation. The Transfer of Media Characteristics Among Media* (Palgrave Macmillan 2014) and "Coherence and Truthfulness in Communication: Intracommunicational and Extracommunicational Indexicality", *Semiotica* 225, 2018 are other important texts. In 2020 he edited *Beyond Media Borders: Intermedial Relations Among Multimodal Media*, Volume 1 and 2, (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan 2020) and posthumously "Symbolicity, Language and Mediality", in *Semiotica* 247, 2022 was published.

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Part I

Introduction[1]

Reine Meylaerts and Kobus Marais

The rationale for this handbook is for it to be a source of information about conceptual frameworks (e.g. functionalist, linguistic, intersemiotic or multimodal approaches, to name just a few) that can be used when studying translation in the broadest sense.[2] It wants, in particular, to provide a response to recent calls for expanded conceptualizations of translation and the consequences thereof for conceptual approaches to translation. As a result of the exponential growth of multimodal and hyper objects massively distributed in time and space, and dethroning the (literary) written text as the primary product of translation, the need for expanded definitions of translation as a complex, unpredictable *process* (rather than as a product), involving much more than written texts (*linguistic bias*) and overcoming the *binaries* (source-target, original-translation, domestication-foreignization, for example) that have traditionally delimited its field of study, has come to the fore. Such expanded definitions consider translation not merely as a research object but also as 'a (research) practice, a process constructing, (re)assembling, and (re)connecting the social' and as 'an intersemiotic all-encompassing epistemological tool and ontological concept' which produces knowledge (Gonne). Of course, the more traditional definitions of translation have a long history and long-lasting consequences in the field of Translation Studies (TS). As illustrated by Alvaro Garcia Martin in this handbook, the 'understanding of translation as a written phenomenon happening across/between absolutes (content/form, fidelity/treason, source language/target language) goes back to Aristotle and made empiricism "a key element in the future episte-mology of TS,"' whereas the linguistic bias long privileged hermeneutics as one of the main approaches for studying literary translations. Structural linguistics' preference for positivist models as well as Shannon's groundbreaking work on information theory had the effect that translation was conceptualized as a mere transfer from one code to another, thus strengthening TS's binarism and its linguistic bias. Tomaselli discusses this problem and argues that reception theory has become a prerequisite for any communication process in order to avoid reducing communication to coding-decoding. Descriptive approaches, which long dominated TS, were also based on empiricism and have been criticized for their 'evident limitation of a positivist view of translation' (Garcia Martin; see also Gonne in this volume) and for the epistemological problems associated with their aiming at explaining and predicting the future states of complex systems (Assis Rosa).

Yet, as the different chapters of this handbook will also show, both recent and not-so-recent approaches (have the potential to) respond to the need for expanded definitions of translation. So, e.g., in his chapter, Salah Basalamah discusses how philosophical approaches allow TS to overcome the linguistic bias. Although descriptive approaches have been 'mainly formulated with literary translation in mind, [they] (…) have been very productive when applied to research on other text types and translation modalities' (Assis Rosa). Jan Buts moreover argues that 'much work on activism in translation has focused on a principled rejection of the binaries and boundaries of old, in favour of a vision of an in-between that can accommodate plurality and diversity.' According to Christiane Nord,

> Functionalism (including loyalty) is an approach that is applicable to all forms of translational action (written translation, interpreting, sight translation, multimodal translation etc.) without any expansions or adaptations. Thanks to its foundation in action theory, intersemiotic aspects have always been included in the concept.

In her chapter on sociological approaches, Moïra Inghilleri analyses Bourdieu's photographic archive going back to his fieldwork during Algeria's war for independence from the viewpoint of intersemiotic translation, in which Bourdieu the ethnographer acts as a translator. For Gabriela Saldanha, multimodality questions 'the very notion of "text" and "product," and, in particular, it has blurred the line between what had been traditionally been considered 'context' as opposed to "text,"' while Cornelia Zwischenberger holds that interdisciplinary conceptions of translation coming from disciplines other than TS can 'feed into intersemiotic and also biosemiotic translation as all of them go beyond the lingual plane and also involve non-human actors.' Similarly, Brian Baer shows how interdisciplinary and transnational approaches are challenging 'the longstanding binary of the material and the symbolic, making possible the emergence of "a new epistemology of translation studies"' (Marais, 2014, p. 15) predicated on new understandings of culture and its relationship to translation.' Yet, as Lynn Bowker's chapter on computational approaches illustrates, the need for expanded definitions does not imply doing away with binary distinctions or other traditional delimitations. In certain contexts or for certain purposes they may remain useful or even necessary: 'Machine language is the only language that a computer can work with directly. In machine language, the instructions and data must all take the form of binary numbers (i.e., 0 or 1).' Sergey Tyulenev and Wenyan Luo argue that a systems approach operates on the assumption that any particular phenomenon that one wants to study is always related to or embedded in other systems, including material, social and cultural systems. In their view, '[t]he discussed systems approaches show how studying translation moves away from isolationist theories of interlingual translation in favour of seeing it as one of the similar or comparable phenomena which can be found in the human world and beyond.' Similarly, Moïra Inghilleri shows how Bourdieu's photographs are part of an ongoing process of semiosis within a larger system of meaning-making. In his chapter, Kalevi Kull argues that '[s]emiotics as a skill is the proficiency to translate – not only between languages, but also between different media, cultures, or species, between very different umwelten and sign systems.' His chapter opens up the possibility to study the translational activities of zoo keepers, farmers, veterinarians and ethologists, to name a few. In addition, the chapters on intersemiotic translation (Petrilli & Zanoletti), multimodal translation (Adami) and intermedial translation (Ellestrom) demonstrate the extent to which semiotic systems are entangled and the necessity for studying them together, i.e. as intersemiotic translation processes. These fields have been

interested in translation for a number of decades now and can no longer be ignored in TS. The last part in the handbook, that on interpretant translation, demonstrates approaches to translation that take existing texts as their point of departure. Douglas Robinson argues that translation always entails the interpretation of already existing texts, but he then specifies this interpretation as embodied in the material existence of human animals. Equally, Keyan Tomaselli's chapter problematizes the reception of semiotic material as always embedded in a horizon of expectations, and he discusses a number of stances or attitudes that an interpreter can take toward a text. In yet another chapter that expands the conceptualization of translation, Karen Bennett explores the role that translation plays in the creation and distribution of knowledge. She shows how translation creates new knowledge and, equally important, distributes existing knowledge to new contexts. These chapters on 'interpretant' translation all operate on the assumption that translation is not limited to the interpretation or reworking of linguistic material only. Rather, it is work performed on semiotic material of all sorts, including concepts.

The expanded definitions and approaches thus call to complement the hitherto dominant conceptualization of translation, defining translation not only in linguistic and anthropocentric terms but also as a semiotic process that takes place in and between all (living) organisms – human and non-human alike. Not only the translation of Hamlet into French, or of oral speech into subtitles, but also communication between dolphins or between a dog and its companion, or moving a statue from one place to another, or rewatching a film are translation processes. In this respect, the recurrent use of Latour's Actor-Network-Theory 'in the conceptualization of complexity models is significant for its [TS] inclusion of non-human actors, challenging any simple binary of the material and the symbolic' (Baer). Indeed, as Maud Gonne points out, for Latour human and non-human actors have to be treated alike within a network, and translation processes connect and transform both human and non-human actors. Similarly, computational approaches define translation as 'a multistep process involving both computer and human agents' and translator as a technical term referring to 'a processor that converts code from one computer language to another, and more specifically from one *level* of computer language to another' (Bowker). Kull's chapter argues that translation starts at a molecular level in DNA and occurs throughout the biosphere, thus including all living organisms, such as plants, animals and fungi, in the tradosphere. From a more general, large-scale ecotranslational (Cronin, 2017) or biosemiotics (Marais, 2019) point of view underlying this handbook, translation then becomes an all-encompassing concept to think the interconnectedness of all human and non-human activities and to apprehend the emergence of social-cultural phenomena. Therefore, Michael Cronin calls 'tradosphere' all translation systems on the planet, all the ways in which information circulates between living and non-living organisms and is translated into a language or a code that can be processed or understood by the receiving entity (Cronin, 2017, 71). Obviously, these are important expansions with potentially far-reaching consequences for the discipline of TS, to which the chapters in this handbook can contribute: 'Marais,' (2020) proposal to extend the notion of translation as constituting society not only among human beings but among all kinds of living beings may come to redefine the place of translation studies in the academic field.' (Saldanha – see also below)

Given the way in which the concept 'translation' has been expanded over the past two decades, we conceptualize translation in this handbook as 'the work performed to impose constraints on a semiosic process' whereby, according to Peter Flynn, the concept of work still requires a further definition:

> Given that semiosic process is probably endless, layered and multidirectional, discovering what the nature of the work performed is, along with the constraints that (types of) work assert, is of vital importance in arriving at any idea of translation in a pragmatic contextual sense.

Such an expanded definition does not mean that everything *is* a translation but that many things have a translational *dimension* and can be better understood if this dimension is taken into account. This should be taken into consideration by Translation Studies if the discipline wants to stay relevant in the twenty-first century digital age, characterized by an exponential growth of multimodal and hyper objects. In principle, and as already pointed out, the potential for repositioning the discipline of Translation Studies is enormous since, as observed by Assis Rosa, 'a variety of academic and socio-political events occurring internationally have made conditions ripe for a "translation turn" in several fields simultaneously, including linguistics, anthropology, psychology, women's studies, cultural studies, and postcolonial studies.' In any case, according to Flynn, 'if Translation Studies is becoming an ever-expanding universe, semiotics can still offer a touchstone for common theoretical and practical debate.' Moreover, also from a methodological viewpoint, expansion is not good in itself: suffice to refer to examples of gender and racist bias in machine translation based on large corpora (Saldanha). This means more in general and importantly, that we still need to complement innovative big data methods with more traditional, qualitative methods based 'subject positions' (Saldanha) instead of simply doing away with them.

Building on Peircean semiotics, translation is then the semiosic process of creating relationships between something (representamen/sign vehicle) standing for something else (object) in relation to someone (the interpretant) in some respect. Peircean semiotics differs from Saussurean semiology (see also Malmkjær and Flynn in this volume) in that it is triadic rather than dyadic and in that it includes the object or referent in its conceptualization. Being part of Peircean phenomenology, signs are not merely meaningful as (logical) differences in a system. Rather, they are pragmatically intertwined with the phenomenology of living organisms and are therefore related to the environment of the sign user (Deely, 2010, pp. 13–26). In other words, 'without the inclusion of context, the whole edifice of Peircean semiotics would crumble' (Flynn; see also Tomaselli's insistence on reception in the translation process). The consequences of such an expanded definition of the role of language and translation in society cannot be overestimated:

> The sign relation is thus endless, like thought and language within and among people. This is not a weakness of language, but a major strength. It allows for development of language along with life – in fact, it justifies the general optimism about interpersonal communication that we require to maintain human societies and also to translate.
>
> *(Malmkjær)*

It also allows Translation Studies to move away from 'an unproblematic, naively representational theory of language' on which its notions of text, author and meaning are based and which 'prevents the discipline (…) from advancing' (Niranjana quoted in Zwischenberger). These important observations are also echoed in Blumczynski and Sadler's chapter on ontological approaches, maintaining that analytical approaches such as narrative theory and critical discourse analysis are characterized by 'naïve constructionism,' viewing reality as created by language, whereas ontological questions, which according to Blumczynski and Sadler are translational questions, are not explicitly addressed in TS. Still, according to Blumczynski and Sadler 'the discipline's

ontological underpinnings have evolved substantially,' as hopefully the various chapters in this handbook will illustrate. Through her chapter on ecotranslation, Shread also contributes to the debate on translation in context. She argues that the ecological crisis requires TS to rethink its relationship to capital, but she also suggests that translators could find ways to overcome the disinterested stance that many people have toward the ecological crisis.

To expand further on Peircean semiotics, for Peirce, the sign is not just something. Rather, it is a relationship between representamen, object and interpretant. The sign is therefore never the representamen or sign-vehicle only. We thus use the Peircean term of representamen, which would be the sign in common parlance or the *signifiant* in Saussure terms. We also use the term interpretant, which would be the meaning in common parlance or the *signifié* in Saussurean terms. We also use the term object, which would be the thing or idea to which the sign refers in common parlance and for which Saussurean semiology does not provide. It is important to note that Peirce does not claim that representamen, object and interpretant are ontological categories. They are phenomenological and analytical categories, in the sense that they were designed to analyze phenomena (Ransdell, 1977). So, phenomenologically speaking, the semiotic process always starts with a first, then moves to a second and then to a third. Empirically, however, what is an interpretant in an incipient translation process can be a representamen in a subsequent translation process. Or an object in one process could be an interpretant in another process. Consider the following example. When an interlingual translator sits down to translate a famous novel, the text on the page is a representamen (First) for that particular translator. However, the text is simultaneously an object (Second) that constrains the translator. It is also simultaneously an interpretant (Third), namely the end result of a previous interpretive process – the work that the author of the novel did to create the work of fiction. In this sense, there is a difference between interlingually translating a novel and writing a novel, though they share the similarities of being semiotic processes. Now, also consider the following example, taken from Eco's (1997) famous work, *Kant and the platypus*. When Westerners first reached Australia, they observed an animal that they did not know, which is now known as the platypus. Their original observations were obviously Firsts, but at the same time, it was a Second for which, at that time, there existed no Third (interpretation) as Eco so eloquently narrates. Well, the initial Third was probably just, 'What the hell?' These examples demonstrate the theoretical point that translation is a process that can originate in either the representamen, the object or the interpretant, or any relationship between them, to various degrees. Since we want this handbook to be a tool for studying translation in the broadest sense, we take representamen, object and interpretant (and the relations between these) as an analytical structuring principle (see also infra).

We are aware that the Peircean semiotic tradition is not the only one available. We realize that the French, Italian and Estonian traditions of semiotics, amongst others, have much to offer, for instance through Lotman's ideas of culture as a translational system. We hope that this volume will stimulate further research to enrich a semiotic conceptualization of translation by integrating perspectives from these various traditions. For now, we think that the Peircean tradition has been best worked out in TS, starting from Gorlee's (1994; 2004) foundational work through Petrilli's (2003) substantial contribution to Queiroz' (Aguiar & Queiroz, 2009; Aguiar & Queiroz, 2013; Ata & Queiroz, 2016; Queiroz & Ata, 2019; Queiroz & Ata, 2020) groundbreaking work on relating translation, semiosis, cognition and creativity. In this sense, the conceptualization in this handbook reflects the current state of affairs in TS, as we interpret it, but we definitely foresee that a similar handbook in twenty years' time will have a different look to it.

The choice of what to include under a particular focus group (category) is based on our judgment as to whether the particular approach would focus on or originate with the representamen, object or interpretant, without ever claiming necessary and sufficient conditions or positivist conceptualization. We are here probably engaging in Wittgenstein's family resemblances, and we are well aware that there might be conceptual overlaps between the categories, seeing that they are resemblances and not cases of pure or formal logic. We do not see any reason why the use of concepts for analytical purposes should be equated with a substantialization or essentialization of the processes to which they refer. Just like referring to reality as consisting of both matter and energy does not mean that you reify either, referring to empirical translation processes as originating in one of the relata does not mean that you reify any of them or the analytical distinction between them. If we do not make this distinction, we shall not be able to distinguish the interlingual translation of a novel (which has as an incipient sign an already existing interpretant) from the translation of the phenomenon that later became the platypus (which was a dynamic object without interpretant) in Eco's narrative above. While it is true that these two processes both entail semiotic work, the nature of the empirical semiotic work differs in each case. The first one constructs a subsequent interpretant from an existing interpretant while the second one constructs an interpretant without the existence of a previous interpretant.

Empirically, therefore, one needs conceptual distinctions with which to operate. Our choice to use the Peircean relata in the semiosic process as 'categories' needs to be seen against this background. It does not mean that we claim that reality is cut up in this way. The 'categories' are analytical or epistemological not ontological. Legg (Legg, 2015, p. 8), for instance, makes the same claim about the distinctions between icons, indexes and symbols, focusing on the subtlety of analysis, which is also our argument here:

> It is important to recognise that as with all distinctions deriving from his short list of three fundamental categories, Peirce distinguishes between icon, index and symbol in **functional** rather than **sortal** terms. This allows any given sign to be a mix of icon, index and symbol, enabling considerable subtlety of analysis.
>
> *(emphasis added – RM/KM)*

The implication is that our conceptualization therefore does not mean that we reduce the process of translation to any one of the three relata in the sign. What it does mean is that we consider the point that empirical translation processes start with or are focused, to a greater or lesser extent, on one of these relata, only to include all three in a dynamic relationship. In terms of complexity theory, this is a way of framing the process conceptually so that we can study it without totally reducing the complexity. Object translation is thus not about translating objects. Rather, it is about the whole semiosic process of translation, starting with or focusing on the object, but immediately relating that object to a representamen and interpretant. Translation processes like adaptation, we argue, are focused on the representamen, but the translation still influences the object and the interpretant. Equally, there are translation processes like scholarly reinterpretations of classical literature that focus on the interpretant, but with implications for the object and the representamen. As indicated above, cuts need to be made (Barad, 2007), and here we try to be up front about the ones we make. It is not possible empirically to observe reality as a whole, and for this reason, we need to employ conceptual categories without thereby claiming that we have made ontological distinctions.

Such an expanded definition also moved us to do away with the Jakobsonian tripartite of intralingual, interlingual and intersemiotic translation because these categories overlap.

For instance, translating a written English text into a spoken French text is simultaneously interlingual and intersemiotic translation, and translating a written English text into a spoken English text is simultaneously intralingual and intersemiotic translation. Thus, we rather suggest that all translation processes are complex and that the nature of the relationships between incipient and subsequent sign systems can be determined empirically only, not in an a priori fashion. We therefore stick to the suggestion that each case of translation could have intra-systemic, inter-systemic and supra-systemic features. The nature of the system needs to be specified empirically in each case. For instance, when one studies the 'interlingual' translation of a novel, one could specify that the systemic level of observation is that of language. The translation would, given this specification, therefore be intersystemic, between two languages as systems. Should one, however, consider the notion of genre for the same translation, one would have to say that it is at the intra-systemic level because both texts would be novels. As another example, one could also study the intralingual translation of a poem, e.g. a sonnet translated into *haiku*. In this case, if the level of observation is genre, the two genres would be in intersystemic relation to one another while, at the level of natural language, the translation takes place inside one system, i.e. intra-systemic. This conceptualization should be able to explain all possible translational phenomena and processes, linguistic and non-linguistic, human and non-human.

The expanded definition of translation on which this handbook is built has found its origin in some important meta-theoretical developments in Translation Studies during the last decade. They include an ecological perspective of translation in relation to the rest of the cosmos, a post-humanist perspective on (non-human) animal and plant life, a complex systems perspective on the interdependence of nature and culture, a semiotic perspective to counter the anthropocentric and linguicentric biases in the field and a multimodal perspective to give recognition to the technological advances in human culture over the past two centuries. In terms of the structure of this handbook, this means that we first present some 'foundational' chapters on ontology, methodology and epistemology to give voice to our complexity view that fields of study do not operate in isolation but as part of larger systems of thinking. As already mentioned, we maintain that the fact that ontological questions are not explicitly addressed in TS (see also Blumczynski in this volume) is a major weakness for the discipline. Questions of being and non-being, especially through the concept of absence, are key for TS. Having played a groundbreaking role in mathematics or biology (Deacon), the conceptualization of the absential (zero in the case of mathematics) is an equally essential category in conceptualizing translation.

> For something to be absent requires not only for it to not be there but for it to be encountered in terms of its not being there. For something to have changed it must no longer be as it was. For somebody to be other, they must not be the self – at least not only self. We see all these issues arise in the context of translation. Translation confronts us with the not-being-there of what is translated. Rather than simple indifference, it produces an absence which, without positively existing, can nonetheless be encountered. To think of translation in terms of change is to raise the question of what exactly there was in the first place but that no longer is. (…) Nowhere are the tensions between stability and change which characterise thinking about ontology brought into view more clearly than with translation in both its lingual and non-lingual variants. From this perspective, translation moves from being a peripheral limit case to a model for approaching the most basic and universal of questions. (…) We have argued that translation studies needs robust, careful, and sustained ontological reflection. But the reverse seems just as true:

> our understanding of being, in order to further to enlarge and develop, must continue to be stirred, irritated, and transformed by translation.
>
> *(Blumczynski and Sadler)*

Indeed, as Maud Gonne, referring to Callon, states: 'Translation is a mode of existence.' We therefore hope that this handbook can serve as a next step in addressing the necessary onto-logical questions within TS, which may then also inspire other disciplines.

In an epistemology of complexity, the complex, undetermined and emergent phenom-enon of translation cannot be grasped through deterministic models and binary categories but should rather be apprehended through relational, processual and non-linear models and categories. Indeed, as Alvaro Marin Garcia rightfully observes, epistemology is of central concern for investigating 'the constructs and methods around which knowledge and dis-course are generated'; however Marin Garcia also shows how 'the particular history of TS as an academic discipline shaped an epistemology that has remained fragmentary and implicit until very recently.' He therefore proposes an empirical agenda and semiotic categories fit for critical empirical investigation.

In terms of methodology, TS, like other disciplines, is constantly evolving and adapting itself to the current twenty-first century digital and ecological age and to the expanded definitions of translation. It has complemented its earlier core focus on product-oriented methodologies with a combination of product, process, context and participant-oriented methodologies (Saldanha). Saldanha perceives this growth and diversification as a positive evolution and as a sign of disciplinary maturity. Moreover, 'as we moved from prescriptivism to descriptivism and critical approaches, we need to keep adapting not only our methods, but our understanding of what is research.' Saldanha rightly concludes.

The remainder of this handbook is devoted to a critical overview of conceptual approaches that are available in the field and that can contribute to our understanding of translational phenomena in the broadest sense. This means that we are excluding all empirical or descrip-tive work as well as the history of the field as evidenced by the different turns. We also exclude an overview of the various types/modes and themes of translation (e.g. audiovisual translation, conference interpreting and literary translation) because these are covered in other handbooks and because they partly overlap (cf. supra). With this move, we also want to make clear that the same translational phenomenon can be studied from a variety of the-oretical perspectives and that the approaches available to (budding) scholars in Translation Studies are a complex of possibilities rather than a normative, linear set that are in competi-tion with one another. This means also, and importantly, that each approach is discussed not only in its affordance to study translation according to a traditional, more narrowly linguistic and anthropocentric definition, but also in its capacity to study the translational dimension in all semiotic processes that take place in and between all (living) organisms – human and non-human alike. As such, this handbook wants to provide both a state-of-the-art over-view of approaches that have proven their utility in the field and, simultaneously, open up these approaches to studying translational phenomena wherever and whenever they occur, whether professional or not, whether recognized as translation or not, but that will make up the field of TS in the twenty-first century. In this way, the handbook will be both a reference guide to existing conceptual approaches and a guide to future developments in the field.

The categories as suggested also clearly show the dominance of interlingual translation in Translation Studies.[3] As such, they are a reflection of the current state of affairs in the field, leaving room for future developments. While we are aware of work on translation in many fields other than TS and while it would be an advantage to have an overview of these, the

nature of a 'handbook,' in our view, guides us to think about the field of TS as currently institutionalized by, for instance, MA and PhD programs. We are not sure that the study of translation in other fields, at this point in history, justifies a handbook. We are aware of work that was done and that is being done to explore this broader interest, but we do not think that it has generated enough conceptualization to justify a handbook.

Notes

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2 We therefore consistently tried to limit chapter titles to the name of the approach, though a few exceptions were required.
3 We also planned a chapter on cognitive approaches which unfortunately could not be delivered.

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Part II
Foundations

Epistemological positions

Álvaro Marín García

Introduction

Epistemology is the field of philosophy that deals with knowledge. It analyzes how justified belief is attained and assessed, and the ways in which these knowledge and certainty generation processes pertain to experience and reason.[1] As such, epistemology is a central concern of philosophers of science, who inquire about scientific methods and progress, and also for scholars within each discipline interested in investigating the constructs and methods around which knowledge and discourse are generated. Philosophers of science have approached these issues along with the ontological assumptions and commitments about reality and human understanding, traditionally focusing on the natural sciences and their description of the physical world (see Rosenberg & McIntyre, 2020 for an updated overview on the philosophy of science).

The social sciences, however, with varied and often intersecting research traditions, offer good examples of the evolution of how the particular epistemologies of fields of inquiry relate to the methods and constructs with which members within a scholarly community of practice consider reliable knowledge is generated and tested. More than rooted in disciplinary convention or institutional status, epistemological positions are closely linked to the historical development of each field. Translation Studies (TS) is no exception. We will see in the next section how the particular history of TS as an academic discipline shaped an epistemology that has remained fragmentary and implicit until very recently. In the subsequent sections, I will explore how the different epistemic positions in TS, dichotomous epistemologies and complexity epistemologies relate to an intersemiotic theory of translation. I will also explain how a complexity-oriented epistemological position, together with a pluralistic approach to translation theory, would benefit the development of an intersemiotic view of translation and how semiotic understandings of translation, on their part, enable a complex, pluralistic epistemic agenda in TS.

Dichotomous epistemologies in TS

TS epistemology is traditionally considered to have had its origin in Holmes's 'The Name and Nature of Translation Studies' (1972), where the new discipline and its contents were

literally mapped. However, translation had received the attention of writers, scholars and translators themselves for centuries, generating a body of reflections that did not engage with the methods and ideas of scientific inquiry, but definitely shaped Western notions of translation in ways that would still imbue TS constructions. An important, recurrent feature in these pre-TS discussions was the focus on the interlingual translation of literary and religious texts, setting the preeminence of source texts and their authors and the immutability of meaning. Reflections on translation often took the form of prescriptive accounts, prefaces and commentaries pivoting on literality and fidelity that would reflect the ideas of the philosophical tradition prevalent at each time. The understanding of translation as a written phenomenon happening across/between absolutes (content/form, fidelity/treason, source language/target language) led to an influential dichotomous view that Blumczynski and Hassani trace back to Aristotelian views (Blumczynski and Hassani, 2019). The disperse and diverse nature of schools of thought – in the absence of a translation school proper – and the establishment of dichotomies dominated the discussion of mainly interlingual written translation, which would end up marking TS epistemology: up to today, TS scholars have in a vast majority focused on binary constructions of interlingual communication and extensively draw from other fields, leading to diverging understandings of the object of study and generating epistemological clashes (the most conspicuous of which can be found in the debate hosted by Chesterman and Arrojo, 2000).

Despite these differences, the dichotomous distinction of absolutes and the focus on written linguistic communication remained constant and central. Until the second half of the twentieth century translation was constructed either as a literary phenomenon or merely a linguistic one. Interestingly, but not surprisingly, given the focus on linguistic texts, one of the main frameworks of reference for the study of literary translation was hermeneutics. Influenced by the philosophers of German Romanticism and their ideas on language and nation (see Von Humboldt, 1996, and also the works of Schlegel and Herder), Schleiermacher brought to bear a hermeneutic approach to translation, posing one of the most influential dichotomies in the study of translation when he introduced his two methods of translation (1813). These opposing methods and the romantic notion of language as a repository or vehicle for national or cultural elements would inspire Antoine Berman (1984) and Lawrence Venuti (1995) to develop what we might call dichotomous theories of literary translation.

From the perspective of Linguistics, dichotomous views, reducing translation to a change in code or a mere transfer across linguistic systems, were further reinforced by positivist models of language dominating the structural linguistic paradigm in TS, for instance, Vinay and Darbelnet (1958), Jakobson (1959) and Catford (1965). These scholars favored a focus on language as a system and translation as a phenomenon that could be studied by contrastive analysis between systems. While Jakobson introduced intralinguistic and intersemiotic translation, he did so from a dichotomy-based understanding of signs, and the focus in TS would remain on interlingual translation. Within the linguistic, semiotic paradigm two main schools emerged during the second half of the twentieth century, the Leipzig School and the Paris School, which accepted that communication across systems was possible by means of deverbalization (Seleskovitch, 1978), or simply detaching *signifieds* from *signifiers*. Both Leipzig School and Paris School researchers initiated the empirical study of the processes of translation and interpreting, pioneering the observation of practitioners and trainees as a proxy to the mental processes involved (Kade, 1964, Jäger, 1977, Wotjak, 2003). The linguistic paradigm evidences the dualism between content and form and spearheaded the observation of subjects in earnest, introducing a key element in the future epistemology of TS, empiricism.

By the early 1970s, Holmes considered that translation transcended literary and contrastive, linguistic accounts. The discipline had developed enough to start discussing its object, ambit and amenable methodologies. He set out to delineate an empirical discipline whose main objective would be describing, explaining and predicting translation-related phenomena. He does that from an epistemological perspective. Holmes's map laid the foundations for the descriptive agenda later to be developed by Gideon Toury (1982) in a radical shift toward the social sciences. The epistemology of descriptive TS is eminently rationalist and realist: it assumes there is a stable reality that can be known by means of observation and that tentative statements can be formulated in the form of falsifiable hypotheses to be tested against that same reality (Popper, 1959).

The empirical, descriptive paradigm has not been uncontested. It poses the evident limitation of a positivist view of translation, assuming stability of meaning and *real* phenomena that would lead to a landscape where, according to Anthony Pym, 'a rather quaint empiricism reigns, as in much of DTS, or in corpus linguistics, or think-aloud protocols, which rarely transcend positivist notions of science' (Pym, 2007, p. 38). In parallel to the development of Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS) following the work of Gideon Toury (1995/2012), some TS researchers working on the literary translation or interested in cultural aspects of translation brought to bear poststructuralist and deconstructionist theories rooted in a relativistic tradition (Derrida, 1985; Arrojo, 1993). From an epistemological perspective, relativism entails that all knowledge is unstable and therefore relative, that is, there is not such a thing as a real touchstone against which theories can be checked, let alone meaning, and so empiricism is not a valid way of gaining generalizable knowledge. The divide between descriptive and relativistic scholars persists despite their evolution over time and it has been one of the hot topics about the (dis)unity of TS as a discipline (Arrojo, 2002 & Chesterman, 2002). Postmodern epistemologies, of course, go far beyond the schematic simplification of deconstructionism here presented for the sake of argument. There are postmodern epistemic positions that are not necessarily relativistic, but that rightly problematize translation as a multifaceted and complex phenomenon that transcends dichotomies and is mediated by human, social, and economic variables (among others) that easily escape from the narrowing down that empirical research requires, making generalizations difficult. For example, from the perspective of historiography, scholars have pointed out that the wide-ranging generalizations of DTS explanatory frameworks do not accommodate the need for a specific historical research in TS (Rundle, 2012). From the perspective of didactics, Donald Kiraly developed a model of translation competence acquisition based on socioconstructivist and postmodern postulates that acknowledges the emergent nature of knowledge, cognition, and translation itself (2000, 2015). While still focusing on language-based communication, in its application to TS didactics, socioconstructivism breaks away from hard realism and absolute categories arranged in dichotomies. Translation knowledge (and, also, epistemic cognitive success) is constructed in each translation instance in a process of interaction with the environment and other people, who, together with the task requirements, constrain the meaning-making process of translation. We will see in the next sections how these positions resonate with a semiotic theory of translation and its proposed epistemology.

Efforts to investigate the translation process initiated by scholars in the Leipzig and Paris schools had been continued over the following decades, favoring the models and methods of experimental psychology and cognitive sciences to the detriment of Linguistics. From an epistemological perspective, this meant the adoption of a realist, empirical agenda based on first-generation information-processing paradigm models (for a discussion see Muñoz & Marín, forthcoming). Despite an explicit interest in the translation process, the models

applied depicted cognition as a linear set of discrete stages that happened without any link to the environment. A period of extensive borrowing ensued bringing from other disciplines methods and ideas that were simply applied to translation phenomena.

The already mentioned recurrent characteristics (binary conflation of variables, focus on language and realist constructions of phenomena in discrete units) transpired in the modelling of translation. We find a telling example in models of translation processes skill acquisition (Wilss, 1976; PACTE, 2003; Göpferich, 2009). These models were multi-componental, including a series of discrete categories to account for the complex web of variables entailed in translation. However, this approach faces a major challenge: dichotomous and absolute categories cannot provide a description for an undetermined, emergent process, which leads to the proliferation of categories, leading to the paradox of overly deterministic models underspecifying a highly complex, undetermined set of phenomena.

During the first decades of the new century, an increasing number of TS scholars shifted their attention to the theoretical apparatus of TS in an attempt to revisit long-established concepts and stances. In doing so, these scholars looked for the specifics in translation to abstract it into categories and embed it into traditions that could account for the complex, emergent nature of translational phenomena as we will see in the next section.

Complexity epistemologies in TS

Starting in the second decade of the twenty-first century, a number of scholars in TS began to develop translation-specific theoretical frameworks that problematized and posed alternatives to dichotomous epistemologies. In Cognitive Translation Studies (CTS) Ricardo Muñoz (2010) proposed cognitive translatology as an alternative to models and theories of the translating mind rooted in the cognitivist postulates of the information processing paradigm (see Piccinini, 2012 for a discussion of cognitivism in cognitive science). Drawing from situated cognition or 4EA cognition (embodied, extended, embedded, enacted and affective cognition) tenets, Muñoz (2010) proposes the first translation-specific cognitive paradigm. It assumes cognition to be an adaptive, bodily process leading to emergent mental constructions. Thus, cognitive translatology does away with the distinction of body/mind and also with the divided mind/environment, since cognitive processes are assumed to be supported by the physical environment and the interaction with other actors in the process. The notion of interaction is critical here, as cognitive translatology proponents view cognition (and therefore the cognitive underpinnings of translation and meaning-making) as a continuous engagement with the environment and with others, that is, constrained by the physical medium, including our own bodies (Muñoz, 2016). The continuum is no longer a cline between two opposing ends, but a plait of interrelated variables that call for complex modeling (Spivey, 2008).

This view resonates with the already mentioned constructivist work of Kiraly that moves beyond linear, transmissionist approaches to translation skill development 'towards an approach that acknowledges the *complexity* of learning systems' (2015, p. 21 original emphasis).

Importantly, cognitive translatology embraces socioconstructivism without abandoning an empirical agenda based on embodied realism, which considers that 'the locus of experience, meaning, and thought is the ongoing series of embodied organism-environment interactions that constitute our understanding of the world' (Johnson & Lakoff, 2002, p. 249).

Other voices pointed out the limitations of dialectal discourses in translation that minimized or simply swept complexity under the rug of absolute categories (Gentzler, 2012).

Among these voices were the calls to address epistemological issues in TS and align them with current developments in Western philosophy (Arduini & Nergaard; Marais, 2014). Marais poses a framework for an epistemology of complexity that is eminently relational, focusing on the links and engagement of elements rather than making distinctions between parts and whole or opposing binaries (2014, p. 20). The complexity theory advocated by Marais is a reaction against the long-standing reductionism of the sciences, prone to isolate the object of study in favor of controlled conditions that disregard the varying, movable nature of reality −both as experienced and as constructed− that doesn't impose radical rationalizations:

> Complexity is a philosophical stance that does not try to reduce either the one into the many or the many into the one. (…) It is a philosophy that does not reduce messiness to some neat principle or law (Latour, 2007), but rather seeks to deal with both organization and disorganization (Morin, 2008, p. 6).
>
> *(Marais, 2014, p. 22)*

In this sense, it is a realist yet not a positivist proposal that recognizes the adaptive nature of phenomena (Kiraly, 2015; cf. Muñoz, 2016):

> Conceptualized in the terminology of complex adaptive systems theory, translation is both a complex adaptive system constituted by complex adaptive subsystems and a complex adaptive subsystem that co-constitutes a number of complex adaptive systems, or social reality as a complex adaptive supra-system.
>
> *(Marais, 2014, p. 44)*

Translation is thus conceptualized in strata that are in contact and pivot around transformation and similarity. Marais proposes a processual epistemology of translation that avoids absolute or reductionist understandings of the phenomena under study. Not surprisingly, his approach to complexity theory and call for a philosophy of translation fits his proposal for an intersemiotic theory of translation that depicts translational phenomena as an ongoing process of constrained meaning-making and meaning-taking (2019).

Blumczynski and Hassani review the dichotomies in TS epistemologies and identify the shortcomings of binary, unidimensional theories and models (2019, p. 340−341):

> Despite the frequent admissions that translation is an extraordinarily complex concept, phenomenon and practice, much of the theoretical reflection devoted to it – as we sought to demonstrate – draws on a simplistic logical paradigm and a unidimensional model.

Dichotomous epistemologies (binary, unidimensional in Blumczynski & Hassani's terms; reductionist in Marais's) offer obvious limitations to an intersemiotic conceptualization of translation that constructs phenomena in terms of a continuous meaning-making process according to Peircean categories (interpretamen, interpretant, object). Reduction of translation to absolute categories of meaning, transfer or source/target (linguistic) text poses an incommensurability issue vis-à-vis a framework that underscores the processual nature of translation in many, diverging instances as shaped by constraints that are an inherent part of the meaning-making process (cf. also with Blumczynski, 2021). This stance supersedes the focus of dichotomous epistemologies on immanent properties from a static perspective.

Complexity epistemologies, on the other hand, do provide two main advantages when conceptualizing intersemiotic translation:

a   A processual construction of the phenomena under study that fits semiotic views on meaning, and
b   the fact that they are translation-specific and do not squeeze phenomena into other disciplines' theoretical apparati, which provides frameworks to develop a translation-semiosis theory catering to the specifics of translation phenomena.

Grounding complex conceptualizations of translation in semiotic theory entails a relational ontology that assumes meaning to be undetermined, not consistent and reliant on the environment of a given communicative event (Merrell, 1997; Marais, 2019, p. 131). If meaning depends on the relationship between representamen and object as mediating the interpretant's relationship to the object, any meaning-making activity (translation included) is a continuum that is never complete and therefore is not amenable to formalized, logic analyses *only*. I stress the 'only' as an intersemiotic, complexity-based layout does not preclude formal logic as an epistemological approach, it simply cannot be fully explained by it (Marais, 2019).

As Marais explains when discussing Merrell's ontology, the implication for meaning is

(…) that its existence is relative to other things. In particular, meaning is never monadic. It emerges through complex interrelationships and through relationships between relationships. Thus, the meaning of any part of the semiotic process, i.e. a particular representamen, cannot be separated or conceived of apart from the whole of the semiotic process.

(2019, p. 131)

Against this background, translation is an emergent phenomenon that is relative to a never-ending set of phenomena. From an epistemological point of view, this means an idealistic standpoint that might prove a challenge for empirical research if phenomena are always derived from or related to other objects of study and therefore cannot be properly observed (see for instance Quine's positions). Also, the relative and emergent qualities of meaning would make it impossible to do empirical research according to set variables as it would be a relativistic construction. Marais acknowledges this issue 'A philosophical position that holds that everything is related to everything else might thus be possible theoretically, but it does not allow for the study of phenomena and processes in reality' and resources to Salthe's take on hierarchical levels to set the first level of observation based on the object of study and according to Peircean phenomenology (Salthe, 2009, 2012) (2019, p. 137). The interrelation here exposed resonates with Stecconi's discussion on the triadicity of T-semiosis where the foundation (the vague qualities that make translation) is a first in relationship with translation events (second) and concepts of translation (third) (Stecconi, 2004, p. 483).

The relational nature of meaning is also the nature of knowledge. Marais (2019) discusses the epistemology of John Deely's *semiotic realism* (2007) as an epistemic theory describing the relational, emergent nature of knowledge construction of which both reality and ideas partake (cf. Latour, 2007). Marais stresses the relevance of Deely's epistemology as based on semiotic translation processes of meaning-making and its convenience to avoid the blind alley of solipsistic idealism/constructivism (2019, p. 153). Deely's work and Marais's application to translation epistemology are indeed a lucid description of knowledge construction. However, those relational categories remain fuzzy and empirical research into translation

processes would require neater, operationalized categories and a firmer form of realism that rightly problematizes positivist positions, but that allows for the construction (for the abstraction) of clearly delimited phenomena as objects of study. In order words, and in terms of Stecconi's take on Peirce's phenomenology (2004): if semiotic realism is a valid and suggestive theory of knowledge construction at the foundational level, there is no reason why we should not avail ourselves of well-delineated models that lend themselves to empirical observation at the event or concept levels provided the data gathered are stable and meaningful to the vaguer or more underdetermined categories (Horst, 2016). I would like to contend that a critical realism position would fit this purpose for an epistemology of TS as a link between fuzzy categories and empirical concepts, and that such an epistemology could be combined with semiotic realism from a pluralist stance.

One of the more suggestive traits of both complexity epistemologies and a semiotic theory of translation is that they lend themselves to a plurality of epistemic approaches to explore different facets of translation. This is relevant for intersemiotic theories of translation that provide a baseline explanation of translation as a semiotic process in iterations between first, second and third instances, but that provide ample space to qualify those processes according to which the concrete semiotic system, communicative event or actual interpretant, representamen and object are. It is a simple set of fuzzy categories. In this sense, complexity epistemologies and intersemiotic theories dovetail in catering to the multiplicity of variables producing, enabling and constraining translation and, at the same time, offering an all-encompassing explanatory framework, that is, semiosis. It might be contended that such an approach would veer into monism, one explanatory framework to rule them all. However, a(n inter)semiotic theory of translation is just a proxy to explain a myriad of constraints at such a basic level that saying translation is a semiotic process, without further elaboration, might end up being banal without ever being wrong. Therefore, further models, possibly pertaining to different traditions, might be necessary. Overly complex models and theories paradoxically fail to describe accurately phenomenal complexity (as shown by Pym, 2003); whereas models, theories or basic constructs that are simple and flexible categories better account for complex processes involving many variables. This is not only a matter of parsimony or economy of means; it is a theoretical design that avoids internal inconsistencies at a given level while allowing enrichment of the object of study at other levels. Having a set of broad categories that pertain to the very essentials of a phenomenon while acknowledging, even if implicitly, the complexity of a said phenomenon as an object of study allows for the *ad hoc* modeling of all the other aspects or variables of that object at several levels and, at the same time, would let us accommodate them in the wide-ranging, more general account. Such an approach would lead us to epistemic scientific pluralism.

Scientific pluralism and intersemiotic translation

Already introduced to TS by Marín (2019, 2021), particularly in application to theoretical development in Cognitive Translation and Interpreting Studies (CTIS), epistemic scientific pluralism as an epistemological position considers that there is more than one possible viable and valid system of epistemic values, that is, ways of constructing knowledge (Coliva & Pedersen, 2017). The possible existence of more than one way of knowing does not follow that all approaches are valid or that they serve the same purposes. Isaiah Berlin, one of the main proponents of pluralism in the history of ideas, already warned against relativism stating that every stance or claim is to be tested for its falsehood according to the given parameters of said system (Berlin 2013). Epistemic scientific pluralism, therefore, advocates for a plurality of

approaches to gain valid knowledge, not for the blanket-bombing acceptance of approaches or for diluting the validity of knowledge in relativism. It focuses on how the knowledge is attained, not on its quality or nature: 'Knowledge might be one – have one nature – even though it depends on a plurality of makers' (Zangwill, 2020, p. 497). Thus, a pluralist approach would not contravene the relational nature of knowledge. It relates to the ways and methods through which we gain knowledge, in this case, scholarly methods.

In fact, the origins of scientific pluralism and the disunity of science are rooted in the interrelated meaning of scientific theories. With the notions of paradigms and their incommensurability Thomas Kuhn (1962) offered a response to positivist takes on the independent meaning of logical propositions (Popper, 1959) and brought to the fore the fact that the meaning of scientific theories could not be isolated from a network of significances (Sellars, 1963) and that their meaning, therefore, was dependent on the use of communities of practice (Wittgenstein, 1953). The logical consequence of this is that scientific knowledge as codified in theories is not universal and that there may be as many theories, and paradigms, as there may be communities of scientific practice. Kuhn's initial radical views on incommensurability would be later qualified by the author himself and further developed in the work of other philosophers of science in the next decade (Lakatos, 1970, Laudan, 1977, Feyerabend, 1978). Kuhn's work, particularly the concept of paradigm remains very influential to this day (also in TS Gengshen Hu, 2019, Kenneth McElhanon, 2007, Siobhan Brownlie, 2003, Derek Boothman, 2014, Maria Tymoczko, 1999, Muñoz, 2010) and over the turn of the century fueled descriptive or normative pluralistic models of scientific practice in the philosophy of science that contested monism and reduction as an end in and of itself. Most of the issues found pertain to the study of translation, and even more so to the development of a semiotic theory of translation, for instance: the complexity of an object of study that goes beyond disciplinary or methodological boundaries (Kellert et al., 2006) or the convenient use of a panoply of methods and reasoning styles (Hacking, 1996; Suppes, 1978, compared to Blumczynski & Hassani, 2019 or Blumczynski, 2021). There is also a matter of scope: theories extend in scope as far as their models do (Cartwright, 1999) and therefore are limited; and of validity: scientific knowledge is sometimes generated in circumstances (a lab setting, a given environmental setting for an ethnographic research project on interpreting, for instance) out of which they may not be replicable (Hacking, 1983). Let us remember here the different levels of observation Salthe (2009) mentions as a way to overcome category fuzziness: different levels might require different, not always necessarily compatible models to inform one only theory.

Radical pluralism might seem at odds with the firmer, critical realism I have advocated before. Several possible ways of knowledge, that are constructed differently, might defeat the purpose of inquiring *one* reality. However, epistemic pluralism does not necessarily entail ontological pluralism. Dupré (1983) argues for the compatibility of pluralism with a realist stance as many methods can converge – and even cohere – on a 'real' discovery. Also, from a pragmatist angle, 'various successes of science will easily lead us to the knowledge of various realities (or various versions or aspects of Reality)' (Chang, 2018, p. 185). A relational ontology might as well be an aim for a variety of approaches across levels of investigation or focus on different aspects of the semiotic process. Ludwig (2015, p. 15) considers the ontological question to be an empirical one and doubts that everything can be reduced to a 'fundamental physical ontology.' Maul et al. (2016, p. 318) on their part discuss diverging commitments about the world (metaphysical), their properties about truth (semantic) and their interpretation (epistemological) that inform varying types of realism. These differences

relate to notions of 'style of scientific reasoning' (Hacking) that permeate object descriptions as theory-laden. That is, what is considered to be true at the ontology level depends on the system of knowledge, its style and commitments and, importantly, on the constraints of the environment – it is a semiotic process itself.

Pluralism offers the possibility to integrate different traditions and styles to tackle complexity when no single approach would suffice (Longino, 2002; Mitchell, 2003) and, what is more important, it enriches our description of our objects of study by adding different layers that can correspond to the different levels of analysis (Barberis et al., 2017; Ruphy, 2017). Again, these proposals do not naively accept positivist realism, but provide for multiplicity of constructed realities as modeled. By the same token, according to Marais (2014), what makes the object of study belong in a discipline is not the phenomenon, but the approach to it, its abstraction into a research object. Thus, different scientific styles impose different criteria for the investigation of the phenomena: 'a style is not valued because it would allow us to discover some truths; rather, a style is what defines the kinds of propositions that can be a candidate for being true or false' (Ruphy, 2011, p. 1214). Styles, therefore, introduce their own research objects with their own ontological commitments, which triggers an ontological debate (Hacking, 1992/2002). These debates are connatural to scientific enterprises and are at the core of their success, leading to deliberation and consensus-reaching engagement within scholarly communities (Latour, 2007). I would like to contend that monist approaches to scientific research tend to obliterate these debates and shrug away complexity by not acknowledging it. On the contrary, pluralism focuses on these debates. A general, semiotic theory of meaning and therefore of translation would allow for the endorsement of scientific pluralism by providing a foundational benchmark, vague or fuzzy categories if we like, on which different, more concrete models can be developed. When discussing Peircean categories (representamen, interpretant and object) in application to translation, Marais points out that:

> The categories are, therefore, only a rough indication and not a detailed characterization. Because semiosis is a complex, fuzzy, and messy process, thinking that one would be able to provide clear conceptual categories would be a mistake. I am looking for categories that would be workable, not absolutely clear in terms of logic. The categories are, therefore, pragmatic and processual rather than logical.
>
> *(Marais, 2019, p. 143)*

It is precisely this pragmatism that makes a semiotic theory and pluralism enable each other. Again, pluralism does not preclude possible, eventual unification either in terms of method or in terms of justification, which, in most cases across the empirical styles, are not that different (see Haack, 1993 for a differentiation between pluralism in knowledge justification criteria and pluralism applied to the 'conduct of enquiry').

Pluralism provides an epistemic approach to endorse a semiotic theory of translation in that it also avoids naïve realism or isolating idealism. At the same time, it is not excluding, accepting, in a pragmatist tradition of which Peirce himself partakes, that there is more than one way of approaching reality, and that 'There is *both* natural *and* social reality' (Haack, 2016, p. 78 original emphasis).

It is the same pragmatism that allows us to turn fuzzy categories into logical ones for the sake of empirical research with any necessary provisos and the enrichment of the object of study by the accumulation of styles.

Ruphy introduces the notion of *foliated pluralism* to describe this enrichment by the addition of layers and reasoning styles. Foliated pluralism exhibits the characteristics of transdisciplinarity, synchronicity, nonexclusiveness, and cumulativeness:

> (…) the introduction of new kinds of entities gives rise to an *ontological enrichment* of the objects studied by science, to the extent that the use in scientific practice of different styles of reasoning widens and diversifies the classes of propositions that can be true or false about them.
>
> *(2011, p. 1219).*

We can be posed with two questions at this point:

a   how can we reconcile the different ontological (or metaphysical) commitments brought along by different styles with a basic realism allowing empirical research; and

b   how can different styles or research traditions be combined with a general semiotic theory of translation?

In arguing in favor of the compatibility of scientific pluralism and realism, Chang (2018) offers an answer to the first question in two parts: first, he sets out from the premise that empirical success is the base to consider a given theory or model *true*. Further, Chang contends that it is not possible to attribute success in science to one simple trait or dimension, and that empirical success depends on a variety of factors that cannot be reduced to one single dimension: '(…) successfulness, in science as in life, is not something for which we can have a coherent one-dimensional ordinal measure. Successfulness is something that comes in various shapes as well as degrees' (2018, p. 178). From this argument it follows that the many paths into empirical success invite us to use different 'systems of practice' (cf. Hacking's & Ruphy's styles).

> If the success of science has many dimensions, it is not likely that various competing scientific systems of practice can be ranked in a single order of successfulness. In that situation it will be very difficult to argue that any particular system of practice is surely the royal road to truth. So it will be difficult to avoid epistemic pluralism, and there will be a methodological dimension to epistemic pluralism, since different systems of practice will typically involve different methods.
>
> *(Chang, 2018, p. 178)*

This kind of methodological pluralism might still be compatible with ontological or metaphysical monism – all the different methodologies leading to one and only reality. However, Chang pursues his argument further, advocating for a pragmatic metaphysical pluralism that accepts an alternative construction of 'truth' based on what he calls a 'coherence theory of truth.' Coherence is here understood as the relation between epistemic activities conducive to success (cf. Haack's 'conduct of enquiry') whereby we assign truth value or deem *real* the object of a representamen (a theory in this case) in a given context. In Chang's example, the atomic weight of an element is real in chemistry but not in nuclear physics (2018, p. 182); in a translation example, the stability of the meaning of the Spanish word *mesa* is seen as the suitable translation for *table*. In other words, it is a way to fit reality into pluralism, acknowledging the constructed nature of reality as an object of scientific inquiry. It is also consistent with semiotic theories as it is a relational ontology in the way of

Deely's semiotic realism, since our empirical understanding of reality, as much as meaning, emerges in interaction:

> As it is a relationship between epistemic activities, coherence is not reducible to the logical consistency of the propositions involved in the activities, though it would often be helped by consistency. Coherence is an attribute of a set of epistemic activities, which, together, can be said to form a system of practice if there is sufficient coherence among them (see Chang 2014 and Chang 2017 for further discussion).
>
> *(Chang, 2018, p. 182)*

The second question posed before a pluralistic approach was how can different styles or research traditions be combined with a general semiotic theory of translation? While pluralistic accounts usually focus, as we have seen, on the disunity of science and the need to embrace more than one epistemic system, pluralism can also be integrative.

Marín (2021) offers a pluralistic approach to translation theory development by distinguishing between epistemic levels: theories and models. Theories are to be considered general, internally consistent descriptions of real phenomena abstracted into objects of study, while models are to be considered concrete, idealized representations of the object of study that can be tested empirically. Models are interpretative (Bailer-Jones, 2009) and therefore may favor some aspects of the phenomenon to the detriment of others. For instance, a model of translation as a negentropic semiotic work (Marais, 2019) might include environmental and physiological constraints as an integral part. These two epistemic levels respond to different coherence requirements: while theories are to be internally coherent and consistent with other theories in their research tradition, models do not need to cohere, provided they provide empirical access to the phenomenon under study (Horst, 2016; Marín, 2021, p. 228). As such, models do not claim any ontological reality, they are functional entities (Giere, 2008; Veit, 2020) that serve as 'intermediaries' (Morgan & Morrison, 1999) between the phenomena and the theory. This kind of model pluralism allows empirical data from different aspects of the object of study into only general theory. For instance, effort models in CTIS can be used to feed the description of the interpretant in semiotic theory of translation or the socio-cognitive constraints of meaning-making in intersemiotic translation can be modeled according to Kotze's view of translation as a phenomenon constrained by socio-cognitive dimensions, which can then be adopted as analysis variables (2020).

This pluralistic understanding of theory development also provides for a mechanism to turn the 'pragmatic and processual rather than logical' categories (Marais, 2019, p. 143) in a semiotic theory of translation into neater, operationalized categories in models. A semiotic theory of translation would benefit from pluralism as an approach that allows for critical realist research that shuns idealist isolation, and that provides for the articulation of general descriptions and fuzzy categories into more determined models to be used in empirical or non-empirical research. At the same time, one of the major challenges for an integrative pluralistic agenda in TS is the absence of a general theory of translation into which the growing translation knowledge could be fed, and a semiotic theory of translation offers the most possible solution to that predicament.

Concluding remarks

Based on the discussion above, combining an intersemiotic theory of translation and scientific pluralism as an epistemological agenda bears the promise of advancing theoretical

development in Translation and Interpreting Studies and, at the same time, enhancing its object of study, transcending dichotomous views of mediation. The benefits of such an approach can be summarized as follows:

- It would contribute to a critical realist scientific agenda avoiding both idealism and positivism (semiotic realism and pluralistic realism)
- It would provide a solution for the tension between fuzzy categories and empirical models
- It would provide a wide-ranging theory to explain away translational phenomena that are studied by means of diverging models
- It would lead to the enrichment, and not only the broadening, of translation as an object of study.

Note

1 For a full definition, see the Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy: https://www.oxfordreference. com/view/10.1093/acref/9780198735304.001.0001/acref-9780198735304-e-1113?rskey= lZ0KbH&result=1151

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Ontological positions

Piotr Blumczynski and Neil Sadler

Ontological foundations

To inquire into ontology is to ask questions at the most basic level – about the nature of being itself. It means asking what it really means to say that something exists. As such, ontology is concerned with everything that 'is.' This makes it further reaching than every other area of study. Not everything can think, act or be moral but everything, whether real or imagined, in some way is. Ontological assumptions, more often implicit than explicitly formulated, provide the ground from which knowledge, thought and action follow. What translation is, for instance, is an ontological question with significant implications for thought and practice. If a text has a 'spirit,' it is possible – and sensible – to think of translation in terms of transfer. But if translation is the basis of all semiosis, and semiosis is extended beyond human language to encompass all 'physical–chemical–biological' interaction and more, as Kobus Marais (2019) has it, then the idea of translation as transfer makes little sense. Questions about what translation is will ultimately end up raising deeper ontological questions. Speaking of the spirit of the text comes down to an ontology of essences and the idea that the truth lies hidden beneath the surface – in Immanuel Kant's terms, in *noumena* (things–in–themselves) rather than *phenomena* (things–as–they–appear). Marais's approach, on the other hand, is grounded in a relational, secular ontology inspired by the New Materialism of Terrence Deacon.

If approaches in Translation Studies embrace a wide range of ontological stances, a bewildering array of approaches can be found among philosophers. The Western line of recorded thought about ontology is longer than almost any other, stretching back over 2,000 years to the Ancient Greeks. Perhaps more significantly still, thought from that time continues to exert enormous influence on contemporary thinking. Galen's 'humoral' theory of medicine, for instance, has long since been abandoned, but Plato's ideas on the nature of being remain profoundly influential, in both academic and broader circles. The sheer bulk of material and range of approaches that have been developed make any attempt to account chronologically – as is common in our own relatively young discipline – for developments in thinking on ontology simply impossible. With that in mind, and given the focus of the volume in which this chapter features, our goals are more modest. First, we explore some of the key issues in the study of ontology, considering both the challenges and the importance of addressing the

question(s) of being. Second, we offer an introduction to a series of key ontological ideas. Third, we give an overview of several major traditions of thinking in ontology. Limitations of space, and in our own knowledge, mean that the second and third sections in particular are highly selective; they address only a small subset of ideas from Western thinking on ontology. Nonetheless, they were not chosen at random and we have emphasized ideas and thinkers who seem, to us at least, to offer ideas of real value to translation scholars.

Issues with the study of ontology

The opening paragraphs aimed to show that getting a grip on our ontological assumptions is a desirable first step in most scholarly inquiries. Yet if ontology is uniquely valuable in understanding everything that is, it is also uniquely difficult to study. Rather than asking about specific beings – whether we are talking about translation or people, rocks or emotions – it asks about being itself. This makes it unavoidably abstract. Ontology resists quantification more strongly than almost any other area of inquiry. Physics is concerned with the study and quantification of the material world and phenomena such as gravity, chemical reactions and stars. Metaphysics (as one major approach to ontology), on the other hand, asks what makes gravity different from a chemical reaction and what makes a star a star rather than a squirrel. These questions to some extent might be approached by measuring and calculation, but they can never be reduced to them. Moreover, the copula 'is' is clearly employed in a very diverse range of senses. In his *Introduction to Metaphysics* (2000), for example, Martin Heidegger offers extended meditations on 'being and becoming,' 'being and seeming,' 'being and thinking' and 'being and the ought,' arguing that each constitutes an important aspect of being, without it ever being reducible to any one of them.[1]

Ontology provides the ground for other areas of study but cannot be fully separated from them. To ask what it is for something to exist inevitably means asking questions about how things appear, what knowledge human interpreters can have of them, what is valuable and what is not and so on. The questions it raises are frequently uncomfortable because they have implications far beyond scholarly inquiry. If I accept poststructuralist ideas on the essential indeterminacy of being, where does that leave me in terms of how I live and think about my own existence more generally? If I accept Christian teaching on the idea that God is the ultimate first cause of everything, where does that leave the belief – widely upheld in Translation Studies these days – that searching for the original or true meaning of anything is to search for something which does not ultimately exist? If I accept the rationalist position that everything which exists is amenable to being completely understood, must I see myself as having failed if I cannot understand everything that happens in my life? To ask such questions inevitably means encroaching on matters of faith, belief and commitment.

The fields in which ontology has been most directly addressed are philosophy and theology – two areas in which the question of being assumes central importance. Yet even within these disciplines, ontology's status as ground complicates attempts to study and bring it clearly into view. It has a tendency to slip from grasp and resist radical critique. Friedrich Nietzsche, writing in the late nineteenth century, for example, argued that the history of ontology in Europe was essentially one of repetition and continuity:

> Things of the highest value must have a different origin, an origin of *their* own; they cannot de derived from this perishable, seductive, deceptive, lowly world, from this confusion of desire and delusion! Rather, their basis must lie in the womb of existence, in the imperishable, in the hidden god, in the "thing in itself"—and nowhere else! Judgements

> of this kind constitute the typical prejudice by which we can always recognise the meta-
> physicians of every age; this kind of value judgement is at the back of all their logical
> proceedings; from out of this 'belief' of theirs, they go about seeking their 'knowledge',
> which they end by ceremoniously dubbing 'the truth'
>
> *(Nietzsche, 1998, p. 6)*

He argues that despite the array of approaches developed across history, they are ultimately reducible to a single recurrent trope: the idea that truth must lie in some way beyond appearances, whether in the early Greeks' understanding of being, the emphasis on eternal essences in Plato, the theological beliefs of medieval Christianity, or Enlightenment-era thinking exemplified by Kant. We will return to some of these specific approaches later on. For now, the key point is to emphasize the difficulty of thinking about ontology in new ways. After all, if thinkers such as Kant and Thomas Aquinas were unable to move much beyond the approaches they inherited, what chance do we have in Translation Studies?

Even in philosophy, then, ontology often features largely in terms of basic assumptions rather than staying consistently in view as a subject of discussion and research in its own right. Beyond philosophy, the tendency of ontology to slip into the background is even stronger. This is certainly the case in Translation Studies where it is rare to see ontology addressed directly or discussed in detail. The main reason for this is that issues of being/existing/becoming are frequently taken to be self-evident. Rather than being deemed insufficiently important to warrant discussion, it seems likely that in many cases they are simply not considered at all. Nonetheless, they have important implications for the kind of questions that are asked and the conclusions that can be drawn. Approaches that see translation as a science, for instance, rely on the ontological assumptions of rationalism: the basic idea that translation (and everything else that exists) has an inherently logical structure. This, in turn, enables the epistemological assumption that that structure can be identified through the application of reason. This assumption is not necessarily wrong – after all, rationalist assumptions are the building blocks for all scientific inquiry and have proven extraordinarily productive in many fields. Even so, we propose that such assumptions should not be made in a blind way.

Where attempts to address ontology *are* made by translation scholars, on the other hand, they have not always been wholly successful. The analytical traditions in Translation Studies inspired by narrative theory and critical discourse analysis, for example, are different in important ways. Nonetheless, both suffer from a tendency to slide into a kind of naïve constructionism, with language understood as simply creating reality. A much-used quotation in work inspired by Critical Discourse Analysis, for instance, announces that 'from a discourse-theoretical point of view, it is … not the subject who makes the discourses, but the discourses that make the subject … The subject is of interest not as an actor, but as a product of discourses' (Jäger & Maier, 2010, p. 37). Our purpose here is not to criticize scholars working in these traditions, both of which have proven extremely valuable for translation research. On the contrary, these researchers are to be celebrated for engaging with such questions. Nonetheless, the difficulties they face highlight some of the key problems with engaging with ontology: (1) a tendency for positions initially offered tentatively and with lots of caveats to quickly turn to unassailable orthodoxies, uncritically passed down through the tradition; and (2) the difficulty of outlining a clearly defined and workable ontological position without being drawn into complex and highly abstract areas of inquiry that seem rather distant from the original focus.[2]

The preceding discussion, then, might seem to leave us in an impossible situation. We need to get our ontological assumptions straight but almost inevitably run into trouble when

trying to do so. Rather than leading to disillusionment, however, it is precisely this difficulty that makes ontology so fascinating. The fact it is so difficult to get a firm grip on it is not a reason not to try. Nor is an absolutely clear position necessarily what is needed: a bit of insight can go a long way toward making reality somewhat less murky (as Jürgen Habermas would define the intellectual's task) and toward opening up new avenues for inquiry, allowing new questions to be asked and old questions to be re-thought in new ways. With this in mind, the aim of the following section is to discuss some of the most relevant ideas and concepts in the Western ontological tradition. We will explore how they have been understood and look at their, typically unrecognized, legacy within Translation Studies.

Key ontological concepts

Categories and categorization

Categorization is a way of organizing our experience that precedes conscious thought and language. It is a way of dealing with the complexity of the world. Indeed, 'one of the most basic functions of all organisms is the cutting up of the environment into classifications by which non-identical stimuli can be treated as equivalent' (Rosch et al., 1976, p. 382). Their survival and success depend on their ability to settle questions such as 'Is this food or non-food? A friend or a foe? A chance or a threat?' in a timely and accurate manner. Timeliness is important because both opportunities and dangers often arise rapidly and unexpectedly; as a result, many acts of basic categorization are quick, near-instinctive reactions rather than conscious decisions. When there is less time pressure, though, and with sufficient cognitive skills and resources, chances for accurate categorization may be increased by a careful analysis of the data against the available body of knowledge and pool of experience, both individual and collective. It is here that fundamental ontological assumptions about 'what things are' or 'how things can be' become directly relevant. Of course, at this level, reflection involves the assessment of evidence and inferential reasoning and therefore becomes entangled with phenomenological and epistemological considerations. Inasmuch as it is possible to isolate an ontological thread in the question 'How can we know things for what they are?' by focusing mostly on its latter part, several approaches present themselves as potential responses.

Before we discuss each of these approaches, some preliminary points must be made. Categorization proceeds by comparison. This involves recognizing similarities and differences, and assessing to what extent they are relevant and important in grouping entities together as members of the same category, or contrasting them as representing different categories. This process is fundamentally translational in the sense embraced throughout this book – as 'work performed to constrain a semiosic process,' it both depends on certain constraints and contributes to establishing them. Categorizing means translating: studying two separate things to establish how they are related to one another, what they share, and therefore whether and how one can stand in place of another – that is, represent it. Viewed this way, the basic ontological questions about various ways of being are, above all, categorizing and translational questions. 'What is this'? is a call to perceive, identify, compare, and assign to a certain category. When we respond by saying 'It is a kind of X,' we categorize and therefore translate. To formulate this response, we need to be aware of what options – and what *kinds of options* – are available.

One approach to categorization in the Western tradition, and the first one to be theorized, can be traced back to several influential ancient Greek philosophers, especially Plato and Aristotle, and is therefore often labeled classical. This label has a dual meaning: under

the connotative layer ('classical' as ancient, original, dominant, mainstream, and so on) lies the basic concept of class. Based largely on the observation of the natural world, both animate and inanimate, this categorization model is concerned with the correct assignment of beings to appropriate classes. At the highest level, these are extremely broad and abstract. In his work *Categories*, Aristotle lists ten kinds into which entities in the world divide, namely: (1) substance; (2) quantity; (3) quality; (4) relation; (5) place; (6) date; (7) posture; (8) state; (9) action; and (10) passion (Thomasson, 2019; Studtmann, 2021). These distinctions seek to capture different kinds of being or indeed different senses in which things may be said 'to be.' As the most fundamental category in the classical view and a conceptual cornerstone of a major ontological tradition, substance will be discussed in detail later but what concerns us here is the basic principle of classical categorization. With some oversimplification, we can say that Aristotelian classes have clearly defined boundaries and are mutually exclusive. Assignment to classes proceeds along a series of binary questions isolating a critical difference. For example, 'mobile substances' are differentiated into 'eternal' (i.e. heavens) and 'destructible' (i.e. sublunary bodies); the latter into 'unensouled' (i.e. elements) and 'ensouled' (i.e. living things); the latter further into 'incapable of perception' (i.e. plants) and 'capable of perception' (i.e. animals); and the latter into 'irrational' (i.e. non-human animals) and 'rational' (i.e. humans) (Studtmann, 2021). Structurally, this categorization is arborescent (that is, it resembles a tree with a system of bifurcating branches) and hierarchical. Axiologically, it pursues clarity and simplicity, and eschews ambiguity. Logically, it is committed to binarism, viewed as the ultimate method of analysis and expressed in its maxim *tertium non datur* ('there is no third [option]').

Class membership is determined on the basis of compliance with necessary and sufficient conditions; once these are satisfied, there is no internal gradation between members of the same category. For example, in the classical view, humans may be either free or enslaved, noble or common, male or female – but not simultaneously both or neither; likewise, no degrees of freedom, nobility or gender are recognized. Classical categories bring with them a promise of universal validity, permanence and completeness. There is usually no admission of a constructed character of these classes and their cultural or ideological inflection. They are typically viewed as ontologically autonomous and self-evident; as something given, observed or discovered, and thus in some way pre-existing the act of categorization. In Translation Studies, traces of a classical view of categorization – though not necessarily in its extreme form – may be found in some attempts to systematize the field, such as the famous Holmes-Toury 'map' and various other taxonomies. Indeed, classical categorization provides ontological footing for efforts to 'chart waters' and 'map territories' which, by definition, seek to be maximally exhaustive, leave no areas unaccounted for, do not allow overlaps, and tend to draw crisp boundaries. In the guise of zero-sum thinking, it is also the logic of percentages, pie charts, and clines (see Blumczynski & Hassani, 2019).

But classifying entities based on an internalized checklist of sufficient and necessary conditions is not the only possible – or indeed, the most 'natural' or intuitively immediate – way of understanding what and how things around us are. In the last half-century, extensive research in psychology and linguistics has highlighted the power of the prototype as a central categorizing and cognitive mechanism. One of the pioneers of this approach, Eleanor Rosch, hypothesized and empirically demonstrated that even such basic domains as form and color – as well as many others – are structured around perceptually salient 'natural prototypes' (1973). Against the analytical, ever-bifurcating drive of a classical approach, Rosch and her collaborators accepted the premise that 'the world is structured because real-world attributes do not occur independently of each other' (1976, p. 383) but are clustered and patterned,

which results in the emergence of prototypes. There is something refreshingly common-sensical in their observation that '[c]reatures with feathers are more likely to also have wings than creatures with fur, and objects with the visual appearance of chairs are more likely to have functional sit-on-ableness than objects with the appearance of cats' (Rosch et al., 1976, p. 383). Our idea of what and how things are is therefore a function of our complex, embodied, multi-sensory, both intuitive and rational engagement with our environment – in short, our cognitive translation of 'a virtually infinite number of discriminably different stimuli' (ibid., p. 382) that make up the world, into manageable and meaningful groupings. The resulting categories are internally graded. Some members are better examples of their class than others, and thus may be said to occupy a central, prototypical position within it. Others are less typical, and in this sense more peripheral. For example, a chair with four legs and a backrest – the kind usually found in kitchens, dining rooms or libraries – is a more likely prototype for the abstract category CHAIR than, say, a swivel chair, high chair, armchair, or wheelchair. In fact, while a wheelchair may in some ways be considered a chair, it would often be more readily categorized as a VEHICLE rather than FURNITURE (of which CHAIR would be a subset).

This illustrates several important principles. Categories are clear at the center but become fuzzy at the periphery; there is usually some overlap between adjacent classes, which means that both partial and multiple class membership is possible – a wholesale rejection of *tertium non datur*. Whether a knife is a UTENSIL, a TOOL or a WEAPON depends on what purpose it is used for. Tomatoes and peppers are commonly regarded as VEGETABLES, even though, according to botanical criteria, they are undoubtedly FRUITS (since they develop from flowers and contain seeds). Prototype-based categorization is thus guided by salience, frequency, familiarity, expertise, context, perspective, intention, purpose, and countless other factors – some relatively stable, others emerging *ad hoc*. This view is sympathetic to variation and partiality; it permits ambiguity, paradox, and some degree of uncertainty. Various categories are related to one another but in more complex ways than through simple inclusion and bifurcation. Prototypes may be thought of as forming constellations subject to gravitational and magnetic pulls, or as local nodes in a rhizome. Even if we momentarily take the narrow sense of translation as a phenomenon involving language – whether this deserves to continue being the 'prototypical' sense is debated throughout this very volume – questions of categorization are not easily settled. For example, is translation a form of rewriting or vice versa? What is the superordinate category: translation or interpreting? Where does translation end and adaptation start? How firmly can the boundaries between source and target text be established? Once we give up the demand for or the expectation of a neat, orderly, and non-contradictory world, we are prepared to accept some fuzzy, uncertain, and partial answers about what and how things are as resulting not so much from ignorance or lack of scholarly rigor, but rather from the complex and chaotic ways of being (cf. Marais & Maylaerts, 2019a).

Even though, as superordinate categories, vegetables, music and games are abstract products of human thinking processes and, in one sense, 'do not really exist,' yet eating vegetables, listening to music, and playing games are perfectly ordinary parts of our everyday experience, or at least the way we think and speak about it. This explains why issues of categorization and conceptualization have always been of central interest to philosophers and linguists. Language works by categorization and abstraction – the same word is used to designate ontically separate entities[3] – and interlingual translation is an especially fertile ground for categorization debates because it constantly exposes mismatches and discontinuities between various linguistic and conceptual systems. In the famous words of Edward Sapir, 'No two

languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same worlds with different labels attached' (1964[1929], p. 69). Although this observation has often been caricatured as implying linguistic determinism and ultimate untranslatability, it does so only from a strictly classical perspective in which distinctions are crisp and absolute, and labels firmly attached. But sameness and difference themselves may be scalar, relative and emergent, which leads us to another cluster of concepts extending into the ontological domain.

Sameness, difference and identity

If the world is a practically infinite collection of various entities and events which we perceive in the flux of experience, to speak of two (or more) of them as 'the same' or 'identical' is to group them together as a 'kind of something' of a higher order – namely, a category. But categories, as we have seen, may be structured in different ways. What do we mean, then, by declaring that two entities are 'the same'? Usually, that they share some abstract quality deemed salient or relevant: for example, shape, size, color, weight, position, value, function, and so on. Some of these qualities are reminiscent of Aristotle's fundamental categories mentioned above, whose usefulness becomes obvious now; clearly, we must have some pre-existing standard of roundness, greenness, largeness, and so on in order to conclude that, say, two green apples are 'the same' in any of these respects. But compliance with that abstract standard is a matter of degree, and this is where prototypes apply: no real apples are perfectly round or uniformly green, yet some will be rounder or greener than others. Somewhat paradoxically, sameness cannot be separated from difference, which starts with a fundamental ontological distinction. The expression 'X is the same …' is linguistically, logically, and ontologically incomplete unless it is followed by '… as Y.' 'Sameness implies the relation of "with," that is, a mediation, a connection, a synthesis: the unification into a unity' (Heidegger, 1969, p. 23). This means that 'two beings which are the same are both like and unlike one another' (White, 1980, p. 112). In Heidegger's view, sameness is 'the belonging together of what is distinct through the gathering by means of difference,' therefore, declaring sameness involves 'holding together and holding apart from another' (White, 1980, pp. 110–111). What is worth noting here is the vocabulary of engagement, pointing us away from an ahistorical, static ontology in which 'man as the rational animal … has become a subject for his objects' (Heidegger, 1969, p. 32). On the contrary, being is 'a question of world disclosure, historicity and language' (Tombras, 2019, p. 44) – difference is *gathered*, sameness is *held*. In a philosophical version of the observer's paradox, 'when we think of something, the act of thinking itself changes the nature of the thing thought about' (Griffiths, 2017, p. 331; see Heidegger, 1969, p. 23). Even that most fundamental dimension of sameness which is often called identity – namely, a relationship of an entity with itself across time – involves mediation and is predicated on change. From one moment to the next, bits of matter are not static collections of particles and atoms; the ontological stability of abstract entities such as ideas, concepts, signs, texts, words, views, positions, and so on is even more unlikely. What do we mean when we say that something, let alone someone, is 'the same' as they were a second ago or yesterday? One of the reasons why the concept of equivalence, once the inevitable pillar of mainstream theories of translation, has practically disappeared from scholarly accounts – as evidenced, for instance, by the absence of this entry in the 3rd edition of the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* (Baker & Saldanha 2020) – is its inadequacy to account for these complexities which we will now consider.

Change and stability

A key concern in accounts of being for thousands of years has been the respective roles of change and stability. We find in the writings of Parmenides and Heraclitus, for example, some of the earliest Greek philosophical writings to have survived to the present day and which pre-date the introduction of the term *ontology* itself by around two centuries, discussion of precisely this issue. Despite the complexity of their thought, each subsequently came to embody an opposing stance on the nature of being: the former emphasizing stability, the latter change. As Heidegger (2000, p. 102) puts it:

> [For Parmenides] Being indicates itself … as the proper self-collected perdurance of the constant, undisturbed by restlessness and change. Even today, in accounts of the inception of Western philosophy, it is customary to oppose Parmenides' teaching to that of Heraclitus: *phanta rhei*, all is in flux.

From the beginnings of philosophy, then, thinkers have sought to reconcile the obvious fact that everything changes with the intuitive sense that, despite that change, somehow things also continue to be what they are. The cells in my body may constantly die and be replaced, but I am still in some sense me. A rock may erode over time and change its color and shape, but it is still in some sense the same rock.

If the problem is longstanding, we must also recognize that stability has held a privileged position in relation to change in Western accounts of being for thousands of years. Perhaps the most important reason for this is the extraordinary influence of Plato's theory of Forms. At its most basic, Plato argued[4] that understanding what anything truly *is* means getting beyond how it appears to the senses. He justifies this by arguing that being ultimately lies in 'ideas' or ideal 'Forms'[5] which transcend their manifestation in any individual being – Beauty, Bigness, Virtue and so on. The Forms are transcendent because they go beyond any material iteration; the ideal Form is not the sum or composite of all existing things that are large or beautiful. Rather than largeness being a property which can be abstracted from concrete things which are understood to be large, Plato considered that individual things could only be large by 'partaking' in Largeness, deemed to pre-exist and enable the possibility for any individual thing to be large.

For the present discussion, the key point is Plato's distinction between the transience of visible, concrete things and the permanence of the Forms of which they partake:

> [Can] the Beautiful itself, each thing in itself, the real, ever be affected by any change whatever? Or does each of them that really is, being uniform by itself, remain the same and never in any way tolerate any change whatever? It must remain the same, said Cebes, and in the same state, Socrates. What of the many beautiful particulars, be they men, horses, clothes, or other such things, or the many equal particulars, and all those which bear the same name as those others? Do they remain the same or, in total contrast to those other realities, one might say, never in any way remain the same as themselves or in relation to each other? The latter is the case; they are never in the same state.
>
> *(Phaedo, 78c–e)*

He was emphatic that the task of the philosopher lay in coming to know the Forms: to know what something really is means getting past changeable concrete manifestations to