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THE NAME AND NATURE OF TRANSLATION STUDIES

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1.1

" SCIENCE", MICHAEL MULKAY points out, "tends to proceed by means of \J discovery of new areas of ignorance."[2] The process by which this takes place has been fairly well defined by the sociologists of science and research.[3] As a new problem or set of problems comes into view in the world of learning, there is an influx of researchers from adjacent areas, bringing with them the paradigms and models that have proved fruitful in their own fields. These paradigms and models are then brought to bear on the new problem, with one of two results. In some situations the problem proves amenable to explicitation, analysis, explication, and at least partial solution within the bounds of one of the paradigms or models, and in that case it is annexed as a legitimate branch of an established field of study. In other situations the paradigms or models fail to produce sufficient results, and researchers become aware that new methods are needed to approach the problem.

In this second type of situation, the result is a tension between researchers investigating the new problem and colleagues in their former fields, and this tension can gradually lead to the establishment of new channels of communication and the development of what has been called a new disciplinary utopia, that is, a new sense of a shared interest in a common set of problems, approaches, and objectives on the part of a new grouping of researchers. As W.O.Hagstrom has indicated, these two steps, the establishment of communication channels and the development of a disciplinary Utopia, "make it possible for scientists to identify with the emerging discipline and to claim legitimacy for their point of view when appealing to university bodies or groups in the larger society."[4]

1.2

Though there are no doubt a few scholars who would object, particularly among the linguists, it would seem to me clear that in regard to the complex of problems clustered round the phenomenon of translating and translations,[5] the second situation now applies. After centuries of incidental and desultory attention from a scattering of authors, philologians, and literary scholars, plus here and there a theologian or an idiosyncratic linguist, the subject of translation has enjoyed a marked and constant increase in interest on the part of scholars in recent years, with the Second World War as a kind of turning point. As this interest has solidified and expanded, more and more scholars have moved into the field, particularly from the adjacent fields of linguistics, linguistic philosophy, and literary studies, but also from such seemingly more remote disciplines as information theory, logic, and mathematics, each of them carrying with him paradigms, quasi-paradigms, models, and methodologies that he felt could be brought to bear on this new problem.

At first glance, the resulting situation today would appear to be one of great confusion, with no consensus regarding the types of models to be tested, the kinds of methods to be applied, the varieties of terminology to be used. More than that, there is not even likemindedness about the contours of the field, the problem set, the discipline as such. Indeed, scholars are not so much as agreed on the very name for the new field.

Nevertheless, beneath the superficial level, there are a number of indications that for the field of research focusing on the problems of translating and translations Hagstrom's disciplinary Utopia is taking shape. If this is a salutary development (and I believe that it is), it follows that it is worth our while to further the development by consciously turning our attention to matters that are serving to impede it.

1.3

One of these impediments is the lack of appropriate channels of communication. For scholars and researchers in the field, the channels that do exist still tend to run via the older disciplines (with their attendant norms in regard to models, methods, and terminology), so that papers on the subject of translation are dispersed over periodicals in a wide variety of scholarly fields and journals for practising translators. It is clear that there is a need for other communication channels, cutting across the traditional disciplines to reach all scholars working in the field, from whatever background.

2.1

But I should like to focus our attention on two other impediments to the development of a disciplinary Utopia. The first of these, the lesser of the two in importance, is the seemingly trivial matter of the name for this field of research. It would not be wise to continue referring to the discipline by its subject matter as has been done at this conference, for the map, as the General Semanticists constantly remind us, is not the territory, and failure to distinguish the two can only further confusion.

Through the years, diverse terms have been used in writings dealing with translating and translations, and one can find references in English to "the art" or "the craft" of translation, but also to the "principles" of translation, the "fundamentals" or the "philosophy". Similar terms recur in French and German. In some cases the choice of term reflects the attitude, point of approach, or background of the writer; in others it has been determined by the fashion of the moment in scholarly terminology.

There have been a few attempts to create more "learned" terms, most of them with the highly active disciplinary suffix -ology. Roger Goffin, for instance, has suggested the designation "translatology" in English, and either its cognate or *traductologie* in French.[6] But since the -ology suffix derives from Greek, purists reject a contamination of this kind, all the more so when the other element is not even from Classical Latin, but from Late Latin in the case of *translatio* or Renaissance French in that of *traduction.* Yet Greek alone offers no way out, for "metaphorology", "metaphraseology", or "metaphrastics" would hardly be of aid to us in making our subject clear even to university bodies, let alone to other "groups in the larger society."[7] Such other terms as "translatistics" or "translistics", both of which have been suggested, would be more readily understood, but hardly more acceptable.

2.21

Two further, less classically constructed terms have come to the fore in recent years. One of these began its life in a longer form, "the theory of translating" or "the theory of translation" (and its corresponding forms: "Theorie des Ubersetzens", "theorie de la traduction"). In English (and in German) it has since gone the way of many such terms, and is now usually compressed into "translation theory" *(Ubersetzungstheorie).* It has been a productive designation, and can be even more so in future, but only if it is restricted to its proper meaning. For, as I hope to make clear in the course of this paper, there is much valuable study and research being done in the discipline, and a need for much more to be done, that does not, strictly speaking, fall within the scope of theory formation.

The second term is one that has, to all intents and purposes, won the field in German as a designation for the entire discipline.[8] This is the term *Ubersetzungswissenschaft,* constructed to form a parallel to *Sprachwissenschaft, Literaturwissenschaft,* and many other *Wissenschoften.* In French, the comparable designation, "science de la traduction", has also gained ground, as have parallel terms in various other languages.

One of the first to use a parallel-sounding term in English was Eugene Nida, who in 1964 chose to entitle his theoretical handbook *Towards a Science of Translating.*[9] It should be noted, though, that Nida did not intend the phrase as a name for the entire field of study, but only for one aspect of the *process* of translating as such.[10] Others, most of them not native speakers of English, have been more bold, advocating the term "science of translation" (or "translation science") as the appropriate designation for this emerging discipline as a whole. Two years ago this recurrent suggestion was followed by something like canonization of the term when Bausch, Klegraf, and Wilss took the decision to make it the main title to their analytical bibliography of the entire field.[11]

It was a decision that I, for one, regret. It is not that I object to the term *Ubersetzungswissenschaft,* for there are few if any valid arguments against that designation for the subject in German. The problem is not that the discipline is not a *Wissenschaft,* but that not all *Wissenschaften* can properly be called sciences. Just as no one today would take issue with the terms *Sprachwissenschaft* and *Literaturwissenschaft,* while more than a few would question whether linguistics has yet reached a stage of precision, formalization, and paradigm formation such that it can properly be described as a science, and while practically everyone would agree that literary studies are not, and in the foreseeable future will not be, a science in any true sense of the English word, in the same way I question whether we can with any justification use a designation for the study of translating and translations that places it in the company of mathematics, physics, and chemistry, or even biology, rather than that of sociology, history, and philosophy—or for that matter of literary studies.

2.3

There is, however, another term that is active in English in the naming of new disciplines. This is the word "studies". Indeed, for disciplines that within the old distinction of the universities tend to fall under the humanities or arts rather than the sciences as fields of learning, the word would seem to be almost as active in English as the word *Wissenschaft* in German. One need only think of Russian studies, American studies, Commonwealth studies, population studies, communication studies. True, the word raises a few new complications, among them the fact that it is difficult to derive an adjectival form. Nevertheless, the designation "translation studies" would seem to be the most appropriate of all those available in English, and its adoption as the standard term for the discipline as a whole would remove a fair amount of confusion and misunderstanding. I shall set the example by making use of it in the rest of this paper. A greater impediment than the lack of a generally accepted name in the way of the development of translation studies is the lack of any general consensus as to the scope and structure of the discipline. What constitutes the field of translation studies? A few would say it coincides with comparative (or contrastive) terminological and lexicographical studies; several look upon it as practically identical with comparative or contrastive linguistics; many would consider it largely synonymous with translation theory. But surely it is different, if not always distinct, from the first two of these, and more than the third. As is usually to be found in the case of emerging disciplines, there has as yet been little meta-reflection on the nature of translation studies as such—at least that has made its way into print and to my attention. One of the few cases that I have found is that of Werner Koller, who has given the following delineation of the subject: "Ubersetzungswissenschaft ist zu verstehen als Zusammenfassung und Uberbegriff fur alle Forschungsbemuhungen, die von den Phanomenen 'Ubersetzen' und 'Ubersetzung' ausgehen oder auf diese Phanomene zielen." (Translation studies is to be understood as a collective and inclusive designation for all research activities taking the phenomena of translating and translation as their basis or focus.

3.1

From this delineation it follows that translation studies is, as no one I suppose would deny, an empirical discipline. Such disciplines, it has often been pointed out, have two major objectives, which Carl G.Hempel has phrased as "to describe particular phenomena in the world of our experience and to establish general principles by means of which they can be explained and predicted."[13] As a field of pure research— that is to say, research pursued for its own sake, quite apart from any direct practical application outside its own terrain—translation studies thus has two main objectives: (1) to describe the phenomena of translating and translation(s) as they manifest themselves in the world of our experience, and (2) to establish general principles by means of which these phenomena can be explained and predicted. The two branches of pure translation studies concerning themselves with these objectives can be designated *descriptive translation studies* (DTS) or *translation description* (TD) and *theoretical translation studies* (ThTS) or *translation theory* (TTh).

3.11

Of these two, it is perhaps appropriate to give first consideration to *descriptive translation studies,* as the branch of the discipline which constantly maintains the closest contact with the empirical phenomena under study. There would seem to be three major kinds of research in DTS, which may be distinguished by their focus as product-oriented, function-oriented, and process-oriented.

3.111

Product-oriented DTS, that area of research which describes existing translations, has traditionally been an important area of academic research in translation studies. The starting point for this type of study is the description of individual translations, or text-focused translation description. A second phase is that of comparative translation description, in which comparative analyses are made of various translations of the same text, either in a single language or in various languages.

Such individual and comparative descriptions provide the materials for surveys of larger corpuses of translations, for instance those made within a specific period, language, and/or text or discourse type. In practice the corpus has usually been restricted in all three ways: seventeenth-century literary translations into French, or medieval English Bible translations. But such descriptive surveys can also be larger in scope, diachronic as well as (approximately) synchronic, and one of the eventual goals of product-oriented DTS might possibly be a general history of translation— however ambitious such a goal may sound at this time.

3.112

Function-oriented DTS is not interested in the description of translations in themselves, but in the description of their function in the recipient socio-cultural situation: it is a study of contexts rather than texts. Pursuing such questions as which texts were (and, often as important, were not) translated at a certain time in a certain place, and what influences were exerted in consequence, this area of research is one that has attracted less concentrated attention than the area just mentioned, though it is often introduced as a kind of a sub-theme or counter-theme in histories of translations and in literary histories. Greater emphasis on it could lead to the development of a field of translation sociology for (or—less felicitous but more accurate, since it is a legitimate area of translation studies as well as of sociology—socio-translation studies).

3.113

Process-oriented DTS concerns itself with the process or act of translation itself. The problem of what exactly takes place in the "little black box" of the translator's "mind" as he creates a new, more or less matching text in another language has been the subject of much speculation on the part of translation's theorists, but there has been very little attempt at systematic investigation of this process under laboratory conditions. Admittedly, the process is an unusually complex one, one which, if I.A.Richards is correct, "may very probably be the most complex type of event yet produced in the evolution of the cosmos."[14] But psychologists have developed and are developing highly sophisticated methods for analysing and describing other complex mental processes, and it is to be hoped that in future this problem, too, will be given closer attention, leading to an area of study that might be called translation psychology or psycho-translation studies.

3.12

The other main branch of pure translation studies, *theoretical translation studies* or *translation theory,* is, as its name implies, not interested in describing existing translations, observed translation functions, or experimentally determined translating processes, but in using the results of descriptive translation studies, in combination with the information available from related fields and disciplines, to evolve principles, theories, and models which will serve to explain and predict what translating and translations are and will be.

3.121

The ultimate goal of the translation theorist in the broad sense must undoubtedly be to develop a full, inclusive theory accommodating so many elements that it can serve to explain and predict all phenomena falling within the terrain of translating and translation, to the exclusion of all phenomena falling outside it. It hardly needs to be pointed out that a *general translation theory* in such a true sense of the term, if indeed it is achievable, will necessarily be highly formalized and, however the scholar may strive after economy, also highly complex.

Most of the theories that have been produced to date are in reality little more than prolegomena to such a general translation theory. A good share of them, in fact, are not actually theories at all, in any scholarly sense of the term, but an array of axioms, postulates, and hypotheses that are so formulated as to be both too inclusive (covering also non-translatory acts and non-translations) and too exclusive (shutting out some translatory acts and some works generally recognized as translations).

3.122

Others, though they too may bear the designation of "general" translation theories (frequently preceded by the scholar's protectively cautious "towards"), are in fact not general theories, but partial or specific in their scope, dealing with only one or a few of the various aspects of translation theory as a whole. It is in this area of partial theories that the most significant advances have been made in recent years, and in fact it will probably be necessary for a great deal of further research to be conducted in them before we can even begin to think about arriving at a true general theory in the sense I have just outlined. *Partial translation theories* are specified in a number of ways. I would suggest, though, that they can be grouped together into six main kinds.

3.1221

First of all, there are translation theories that I have called, with a somewhat unorthodox extension of the term, *medium-restricted translation theories,* according to the medium that is used. Medium-restricted theories can be further subdivided into theories of translation as performed by humans (human translation), as performed by computers (machine translation), and as performed by the two in conjunction (mixed or machine- aided translation). Human translation breaks down into (and restricted theories or "theories" have been developed for) oral translation or interpreting (with the further distinction between consecutive and simultaneous) and written translation. Numerous examples of valuable research into machine and machine-aided translation are no doubt familiar to us all, and perhaps also several into oral human translation. That examples of medium-restricted theories of written translation do not come to mind so easily is largely owing to the fact that their authors have the tendency to present them in the guise of unmarked or general theories.

Second, there are theories that are area-restricted. *Area-restricted theories* can be of two closely related kinds; restricted as to the languages involved or, which is usually not quite the same, and occasionally hardly at all, as to the cultures involved. In both cases, language restriction and culture restriction, the degree of actual limitation can vary. Theories are feasible for translation between, say, French and German (language-pair restricted theories) as opposed to translation within Slavic languages (language-group restricted theories) or from Romance languages to Germanic languages (language-group pair restricted theories). Similarly, theories might at least hypothetically be developed for translation within Swiss culture (one-culture restricted), or for translation between Swiss and Belgian cultures (cultural-pair restricted), as opposed to translation within western Europe (cultural- group restricted) or between languages reflecting a pre-technological culture and the languages of contemporary Western culture (cultural-group pair restricted). Language-restricted theories have close affinities with the work being done in comparative linguistics and stylistics (though it must always be remembered that a language-pair translation grammar must be a different thing from a contrastive grammar developed for the purpose of language acquisition). In the field of culture- restricted theories there has been little detailed research, though culture restrictions, by being confused with language restrictions, sometimes get introduced into language-restricted theories, where they are out of place in all but those rare cases where culture and language boundaries coincide in both the source and target situations. It is moreover no doubt true that some aspects of theories that are presented as general in reality pertain only to the Western cultural area.

3.1223

Third, there are *rank-restricted theories,* that is to say, theories that deal with discourses or texts as wholes, but concern themselves with lower linguistic ranks or levels. Traditionally, a great deal of writing on translation was concerned almost entirely with the rank of the word, and the word and the word group are still the ranks at which much terminologically-oriented thinking about scientific and technological translation takes place. Most linguistically-oriented research, on the other hand, has until very recently taken the sentence as its upper rank limit, largely ignoring the macro-structural aspects of entire texts as translation problems. The clearly discernible trend away from sentential linguistics in the direction of textual linguistics will, it is to be hoped, encourage linguistically-oriented theorists to move beyond sentence-restricted translation theories to the more complex task of developing text-rank (or "rank-free") theories.

3.1224

Fourth, there are *text-type* (or discourse-type) *restricted theories,* dealing with the problem of translating specific types or genres of lingual messages. Authors and literary scholars have long concerned themselves with the problems intrinsic to translating literary texts or specific genres of literary texts; theologians, similarly, have devoted much attention to questions of how to translate the Bible and other sacred works. In recent years some effort has been made to develop a specific theory for the translation of scientific texts. All these studies break down, however, because we still lack anything like a formal theory of message, text, or discourse types. Both Buhler's theory of types of communication, as further developed by the Prague structuralists, and the definitions of language varieties arrived at by linguists particularly of the British school provide material for criteria in defining text types that would lend themselves to operationalization more aptly than the inconsistent and mutually contradictory definitions or traditional genre theories. On the other hand, the traditional theories cannot be ignored, for they continue to play a large part in creating the expectation criteria of translation readers. Also requiring study is the important question of text-type skewing or shifting in translation.

3.1225

Fifth, there are *time-restricted theories,* which fall into two types: theories regarding the translation of contemporary texts, and theories having to do with the translation of texts from an older period. Again there would seem to be a tendency to present one of the theories, that having to do with contemporary texts, in the guise of a general theory; the other, the theory of what can perhaps best be called cross-temporal translation, is a matter that has led to much disagreement, particularly among literarily oriented theorists, but to few generally valid conclusions.

3.1226

Finally, there are *problem-restricted theories,* theories which confine themselves to one or more specific problems within the entire area of general translation theory, problems that can range from such broad and basic questions as the limits of variance and invariance in translation or the nature of translation equivalence (or, as I should prefer to call it, translation matching) to such more specific matters as the translation of metaphors or of proper names.

3.123

It should be noted that theories can frequently be restricted in more than one way. Contrastive linguists interested in translation, for instance, will probably produce theories that are not only language-restricted but rank- and time-restricted, having to do with translations between specific pairs of contemporary temporal dialects at sentence rank. The theories of literary scholars, similarly, usually are restricted as to medium and text type, and generally also as to culture group; they normally have to do with written texts within the (extended) Western literary tradition. This does not necessarily reduce the worth of such partial theories, for even a theoretical study restricted in every way—say a theory of the manner in which subordinate clauses in contemporary German novels should be translated into written English— can have implications for the more general theory towards which scholars must surely work. It would be wise, though, not to lose sight of such a truly general theory, and wiser still not to succumb to the delusion that a body of restricted theories—for instance, a complex of language-restricted theories of how to translate sentences—can be an adequate substitute for it.

3.2

After this rapid overview of the two main branches of pure research in translation studies, I should like to turn to that branch of the discipline which is, in Bacon's words, "of use" rather than "of light": applied translation studies.

3.21

In this discipline, as in so many others, the first thing that comes to mind when one considers the applications that extend beyond the limits of the discipline itself is that of teaching. Actually, the teaching of translating is of two types which need to be carefully distinguished. In the one case, translating has been used for centuries as a technique in foreign-language teaching and a test of foreign-language acquisition. I shall return to this type in a moment. In the second case, a more recent phenomenon, translating is taught in schools and courses to train professional translators. This second situation, that of *translator training,* has raised a number of question that fairly cry for answers: questions that have to do primarily with teaching methods, testing techniques, and curriculum planning. It is obvious that the search for well- founded, reliable answers to these questions constitutes a major area (and for the time being, at least, *the* major area) of research in applied translation studies.

3.22

A second, closely related area has to do with the needs for translation aids, both for use in translator training and to meet the requirements of the practising translator. The needs are many and various, but fall largely into two classes: (1) lexicographical and terminological aids and (2) grammars. Both these classes of aids have traditionally been provided by scholars in other, related disciplines, and it could hardly be argued that work on them should be taken over *in toto* as areas of applied translation studies. But lexicographical aids often fall far short of translation needs, and contrastive grammars developed for language-acquisition purposes are not really an adequate substitute for variety-marked translation-matching grammars. There would seem to be a need for scholars in applied translation studies to clarify and define the specific requirements that aids of these kinds should fulfil if they are to meet the needs of practising and prospective translators, and to work together with lexicologists and contrastive linguists in developing them.

3.23

A third area of applied translation studies is that of *translation policy.* The task of the translation scholar in this area is to render informed advice to others in defining the place and role of translators, translating, and translations in society at large: such questions, for instance, as determining what works need to be translated in a given socio-cultural situation, what the social and economic position of the translator is and should be, or (and here I return to the point raised above) what part translating should play in the teaching and learning of foreign languages. In regard to that last policy question, since it should hardly be the task of translation studies to abet the use of translating in places where it is dysfunctional, it would seem to me that priority should be given to extensive and rigorous research to assess the efficacy of translating as a technique and testing method in language learning. The chance that it is not efficacious would appear to be so great that in this case it would seem imperative for program research to be preceded by policy research.

3.24

A fourth, quite different area of applied translation studies is that of *translation criticism.* The level of such criticism is today still frequently very low, and in many countries still quite uninfluenced by developments within the field of translation studies. Doubtless the activities of translation interpretation and evaluation will always elude the grasp of objective analysis to some extent, and so continue to reflect the intuitive, impressionist attitudes and stances of the critic. But closer contact between translation scholars and translation critics could do a great deal to reduce the intuitive element to a more acceptable level.

3.31

After this brief survey of the main branches of translation studies, there are two further points that I should like to make. The first is this: in what has preceded, descriptive, theoretical, and applied translation studies have been presented as three fairly distinct branches of the entire discipline, and the order of presentation might be taken to suggest that their import for one another is unidirectional, translation description supplying the basic data upon which translation theory is to be built, and the two of them providing the scholarly findings which are to be put to use in applied translation studies. In reality, of course, the relation is a dialectical one, with each of the three branches supplying materials for the other two, and making use of the findings which they in turn provide it. Translation theory, for instance, cannot do without the solid, specific data yielded by research in descriptive and applied translation studies, while on the other hand one cannot even begin to work in one of the other two fields without having at least an intuitive theoretical hypothesis as one's starting point. In view of this dialectical relationship, it follows that, though the needs of a given moment may vary, attention to all three branches is required if the discipline is to grow and flourish.

3.32

The second point is that, in each of the three branches of translation studies, there are two further dimensions that I have not mentioned, dimensions having to do with the study, not of translating and translations, but of translation studies itself. One of these dimensions is historical: there is a field of the history of translation theory, in which some valuable work has been done, but also one of the history of translation description and of applied translation studies (largely a history of translation teaching and translator training) both of which are fairly well virgin territory. Likewise there is a dimension that might be called the methodological or meta-theoretical, concerning itself with problems of what methods and models can best be used in research in the various branches of the discipline (how translation theories, for instance, can be formed for greatest validity, or what analytic methods can best be used to achieve the most objective and meaningful descriptive results), but also devoting its attention to such basic issues as what the discipline itself comprises.

This paper has made a few excursions into the first of these two dimensions, but all in all it is meant to be a contribution to the second. It does not ask above all for agreement. Translation studies has reached a stage where it is time to examine the subject itself. Let the meta-discussion begin.