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# Applying Luhmann to Translation Studies

## Translation in Society

Sergey Tyulenev

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**Посвящается Арсению и памяти моей мамы,**
**Тюленевой Нины Трифоновны (1932–2010)**
**To Arseny and to the memory of my mother**

It is present day challenge. Whether we accept its tenets or not, we cannot ignore its standards.

—Francisco J. Varela

To move forward is to concoct new patterns of thought, which in turn dictate the design of the models and experiments.

—Edward O. Wilson

Around midday, with the tide, The Unknown Island finally set to sea, in search of itself.

—José Saramago. *The Tale of the Unknown Island*

# Contents

# Figures

# Tables

# Acknowledgments

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# Introduction

The present book is in line of the research conducted in a series of books published by one of the leading sociologists of the twentieth century Niklas Luhmann (1927–98). Among his numerous publications (see bibliographies of Luhmann's works in German in Baraldi, Corsi, and Esposito 1997 and of his works translated into English in Moeller 2006), there are two major general expositions of his social systems theory (SST) and a series of what may be called case studies, that is, studies of individual social subsystems. The former group is comprised of general SST works: *Soziale Systeme: Grundriss einer allgemeinen Theorie* (1984, in English translation: *Social Systems*, see Luhmann 1995) and *Die Gesellschaft der Gesellschaft* (1997, *The Society of Society*[1]). The latter group includes monographs on the economy (*Die Wirtschaft der Gesellschaft*, 1988), science (*Die Wissenschaft der Gesellschaft*, 1990), law (*Das Recht der Gesellschaft*, 1995), art (*Die Kunst der Gesellschaft*, 1995), religion (*Die Religion der Gesellschaft*, published posthumously by André Kieserling, 2000), education (*Die Erziehungssystem der Gesellschaft*, published posthumously by Dieter Lenzen, 2001) and others (see also Runkel and Burkart 2005, 7, 11). The second type of Luhmann's publications, where SST is applied to individual social function systems, serves as a model for the present monograph, and, consequently, the latter aspires to continue Luhmann's original series by adding a systemic description of one more social function system—the translation system.

Although there have been attempts to describe translation in terms of SST (see an overview in Section 2.1), the subject has not been treated in any satisfactorily comprehensive fashion. This is the ambition of this research—to go beyond simplified and cursory outlines of the applicability of only the major SST concepts and to explore Luhmann's theory in all its inspiring complexity.

In a nutshell, Luhmann considered society as a self-reproducing (autopoietic) system surrounded by an environment. The system is composed of subsystems. In modern society such subsystems include the economy, law, politics, art, religion, mass media, and education. The list is by no means exhaustive. Luhmann's social system theory allows and indeed prompts its application to more than these subsystems (see Berg and Schmidt 2000;

Seidl and Becker 2005; Seidl 2005; Ihlen, Ruler, and Fredriksson 2009, 187–211). Any social formation may be studied from the standpoint of SST as long as it claims to be or can be described as a self-reproducing unity. Translation is no exception and this is what I intend to demonstrate in this study.

In the above said, there is already a great deal to define and explain: What exactly is a social system? What is the difference between system and subsystem? What is environment and what is its relationship with the system? I will discuss all these issues in due course and apply these notions to translation. By and large, in my application of SST to translation, I will follow the pattern set by Luhmann in the mentioned series of books on the economy law, politics, art, religion, and education as social systems. More specifically, I will describe translation qua system with its internal mechanisms and then its relationship with other social units.

Needless to say, the field of possibilities to apply Luhmann's SST as well as other sociological and systems theories to translation is vast, and one cannot hope to cover it in one monograph. Here I would like to quote Gregory Bateson who, having adumbrated in a book the line of his research, warned the reader: "Some of these questions are touched upon in the essays, but the main thrust of the book is to clear the way so that such questions can be meaningfully asked" (1972, xviii). In this study, mine is a similar task. While going deeper, than any existing relevant attempts in translation studies, into Luhmann's SST and its sources, I do not claim to have exhausted the subject, Luhmann's social theory being so rich and many-faceted that it is impossible to consider all what it has to offer in any single study.

## VIRGIL OR BEATRICE, BUT DEFINITELY AN "ASTONISHING" TRANSLATOR

> Society and social laws lay hid in night.
> God said: "Let Luhmann be" and all was light.
>
> —Dietrich Schwanitz

> If there is no place like our present homelessness away from home, then it is Luhmann who can best guide us in this ever-expanding wilderness.
>
> —William Rasch

Luhmann came into sociology when postmodern theorizing came to a kind of bifurcation point, a state of instability, after which a system's self-organization is unpredictable. After the disappearance of the transcending observer, metanarratives, that is, grand theories encompassing and unifying modern historical and social experience and attempting to explain it, were declared bankrupt, and the project of creating such theories was

abandoned. Since there is no such external observer, whatever observation is made, it is inevitably made from inside (the world) and cannot claim to suggest more than a representation among many other possible and existing representations. Admitting that no one binding representation of society is any longer possible, Luhmann did not assess the situation in exclusively negative or critical terms. He believed there was still something to be said about our highly differentiated and fragmented world. The end of metanarrative did not mean, for Luhmann, the end of theory, but rather—"a challenge to theory" (Knodt 1995, x–xi). And he took up the challenge.

Although describing himself as a sociologist, Luhmann virtually broke with contemporary sociology which, in his opinion, showed deficit in theory and resorted to piling up data and uncritical raking through classics (2009, 11). He saw a way out in turning for inspiration to other disciplines. He bravely exploded sociological boundaries when he combined social theory with the most recent scientific theoretical ideas, notably physics, information theory, biology, general systems theory, etc.

Non-sociological domains enabled Luhmann to come to grips with the growing rationalization and pluralization of our disenchanted world, picking up where Max Weber left off (Rasch 2000, 2). This is where Luhmann and another giant figure of modern sociological thought Jürgen Habermas are drastically different (Habermas and Luhmann 1975; Edgar 2006, 80, 86, 151–2; Donati 2011, 21). Luhmann does not hope to regain the unity of reason and, ultimately, the world. "Rather, in Weberian fashion, he participates in the operations and mitosis-like self-divisions of modern rationality by describing how those operations function" (Rasch 2000, 11). Habermas, on the contrary, sees his mission in finding a unifying basis for the world which has had a great fall but which might, as Habermas seems to believe, be put together again. This seems to be the ultimate goal of Habermas's critical stance. That is why he insists on the importance to balance instrumental action with communicative action. That is how he hopes to regain the territory lost by the Lifeworld pushed on all sides by the colonizing systems (Habermas 1989a).

Luhmann paints a warts-and-all portrait of the de-centered and demystified world of modernity. He does not engage in either criticism or building a new Noah's arc of a sort. In his SST, Luhmann presents the world as a multitude of equally unequal systems. Specifically, he is interested in self-(re)producing, or autopoietic, systems. Each system, being operationally closed, is surrounded by an environment. Steering clear off the rocks of solipsism and following von Foerster, Luhmann recognizes that autopoietic systems are not only closed—because, although they produce their elements themselves and out of themselves, they obtain necessary 'ingredients' from the environment. Being a sociologist, he is primarily concerned with social systems, communication-based self-reproducing systems.

Luhmann's is the mission of describing what might be out there, in reality. He depicts reality or, some may insist, constructs it. Indeed, with the

premise of autopoiesis in the focus, it is difficult for a theory to claim to describe reality as it is or even be sure that it is; therefore, Luhmann says: "Reality may be an illusion, but the illusion itself is real" (qtd. in Knodt 1995, 493, endnote 33; see also Schulte 1993, 17 sq.). He does not criticize reality. In this respect, he differs not only from Habermas but also from such prominent modern sociologists as Anthony Giddens and Pierre Bourdieu, who actively engaged in criticizing modern society (Elliott 2009, 122–52). Rejecting functionalists' aloofness, Giddens, for instance, defines the task of social science as elaborating conceptions of social activities and of the human agent which have to be of clear empirical value. He rejects purely epistemological disputes relevant to social theory. Therefore, he suggests that understanding human being and doing as well as social reproduction and transformation should be focused upon (1984, xvii, xix).

Luhmann, on the contrary, sees himself as a kind of meticulous mapmaker. To be sure, he is fully aware that reality is/may be much more complex than any map can hope to show. Therefore, for him, the more complex a theory is, the closer it comes to reality: the more complex, the more realistic (Luhmann 1997, 137). Inevitably, a more complicated question generates a more complex answer and explanation (cf. ibid., 100). The complexity of reality is of course inevitably reduced in theory, yet "reduced complexity is not excluded complexity, but rather "sublated" [*aufgehobene*] complexity" (Luhmann 1995, l). As any system reduces the complexity of its environment, each explanation reduces the complexity of its subject (as any presentation of Luhmann's SST reduces SST, for that matter). Yet the reduction does not simply curtail the original complexity; rather it opens countless new ways for entering, or re-entering, the original complexity (although, Luhmann warns, any such entering will have to produce its own reduction).

Luhmann's role in modern sociology is often viewed as that of radicalizing existing theoretical premises or introducing controversial ruptures with the existing modes of theorizing the social. For example, institutional analysis, social theories foregrounding the role of institutions, such as states, in social life, is already rooted in early sociological thought (notably in Durkheim's works). Recently, it has had a renaissance in modern reactions to rational actors models and their atomistic accounts of social processes. Oliver E. Williamson, for instance, attacked individualistic social theories (primarily in microeconomics) by saying that actors have only limited cognitive ability, are poorly informed, and act opportunistically. This is why institutions step in to reduce social uncertainty (Calhoun et al. 2002, 134). Institutional analysis begins with the premise of interdependent social activities. But Luhmann draws radical conclusions when he examines the institutional nature of human social activity. If one is to understand Luhmann's argument, it would be helpful to start by examining the "other minds" problem. No one can know another consciousness, one can only know what is communicated by another person, and one can understand communication by selecting and filtering the communicated message by applying categories of one's own mind.

Interaction is, therefore, postulated as nothing more than what communication systems (can) observe. Following up on Durkheim's suggestions Luhmann sees society as differentiating itself into subsystems (e.g., law, science, religion, economics). The notion *autopoiesis*, meaning the self-referentiality of self-differentiated subsystems, brings us back to the "other minds" problem: systems observe other systems' behavior, but what they can do is only to construct by interpreting the observed actions by using their own binary codes. The assumption concerning social subsystems' closed self-referentiality revolutionizes the way to conceptualize interactions of (sub)systems. It is in this sense that Luhmann's stance is constructionist. Yet importantly, Luhmann applies his radical views to institutions—not to individuals (Calhoun et al. 2002, 135–6).

One of the shocking ruptures created by Luhmann is his famous breaking with old European anthropocentrism. Putting social institutions and communication in the center of his sociological considerations, he rejected considering human beings as elements of social systems (Moeller 2006, 79–82). He reconceptualized social reproduction as self-reproduction of meaning, understood in its phenomenological sense (not in the hermeneutic one as opposing "meaninglessness"). Meaning is theorized by Luhmann as a repertoire, or—more precisely—a *horizon* of possibilities. Social communication, composed of temporalized communication events, selects (actualizes) one option of the horizon and puts aside the rest. It is meaning that is reproduced socially. Thus, "in a brilliant move" (Knodt 1995, xxiii), Luhmann made the concept of autopoiesis, with its key idea of self-reproduction, applicable to social theory (it would be absurd to theorize social reproduction as the reproduction of human beings!). Habermas sees Luhmann's work as an "astonishing job of translation" which demonstrates that the language of general systems theory "can be so flexibly adapted and expanded that it yields novel, not merely objectivating but objectivistic descriptions even of subtle phenomena of the lifeworld" (1987, 385).

With "this brilliant move," among other things, Luhmann beheaded old metaphysics-based social critique, advocated, among others, by Habermas himself (yet Habermas has the nerve to recognize and appreciate Luhmann's efforts!). Luhmann replaces subject-centered reason with systems rationality. He deprives the critique of reason in the sense of a critique of metaphysics and of power of its object. Since Luhmann's SST not only claims to contribute to its specific scientific discipline but also influences society at large, it exchanges metaphysically grounded convictions with those metabiologically anchored. As a result, the conflict of the objectivists with the subjectivists is rendered pointless. "Linguistically generated intersubjectivity" and "self-referentially closed system" become the catchwords for a polemic which will replace the mind-body controversy (Habermas 1987, 385).

This rupture has been a shock that causes misunderstandings even among sociologists, let alone scholars in various other adjacent areas of social research, including translation students. The shock seems to have

dealt such a heavy blow that, not infrequently, no explanations are accepted (even before they can be found acceptable or otherwise on the ground of reasonable weighing of pros and contras and not on the ground of pure bigotry). The density of Luhmann's prose—found by those, preferring easier reading, arid, forbidding, and irritating—only aggravates the situation: for example, not too many are willing to scrape through *Social Systems*, a six-hundred-odd-page volume, to the chapter where Luhmann addresses the issue (1995, 210–3, as well as the rest of chapter 6, "Interpenetration").

Luhmann's original contribution to modern sociological thought is, first and foremost, that he suggested a new way of describing modern society and modernity itself. In social theory, he was the first to move beyond the functionalist paradigm in a fresh and innovative way and adapt the theory of autopoiesis and complex theories of self-steering in systems, borrowed from biology and cybernetics, respectively, to social units (Runkel and Burkart 2005, 7–11; Schützeichel 2003, 235–61). The step was so bold that it may be interpreted as a break with functionalism. As Eva Knodt suggests, Luhmann's sociological paradigm shift may also be seen as a shift in his own research career, characterized by breaking with Talcott Parsons's structural functionalism and by adapting theoretical models borrowed from cognitive biology and second-order cybernetics (1995, xiv). Whatever our interpretation of Luhmann's relationship with functionalism, it is obvious that he shook the very foundations of functionalism, which led to reconsidering some of key concepts. Acknowledging Parsons and his inspiring influence, Luhmann, however, revises his social theory.

The autopoietic turn in social theory is associated primarily with Luhmann's work. He enriched the application of system theory to sociology by discussing the sociological potential of ideas of the biologists von Bertalanffy, Maturana and Varela, cybernetician Wiener, information theorist Shannon, computer design theorists Turing and von Neumann, mathematician Spencer Brown, systems theorist von Foerster, to name only the most important names for SST.

Throughout history, there have been different types of social systems' self-organization. According to Luhmann, at least four such types may be singled out: segmentary differentiation (the system is composed of nearly identical self-sufficient subsystems); center/periphery (the capital vs. provinces); stratified (rank-based) differentiation; and functional differentiation of modern society. The last type of social-systemic organization is exactly the Weberian rationalized and pluralized world of modernity. Although the leading social philosophers, in general, tend to agree with such a vision of modern society (Donati 2011, 20–58), the difference between them, best exemplified by the controversy between Habermas and Luhmann (1975), is in how they answer the questions: Is the social reality out of joint, so to speak, and shall we accept it as it is or try to change it to make it somehow better? It should be noted, however, that to change the world of rationalization and pluralization is to do away with rationalization and pluralization,

and this is "in no way desirable" (Odo Marquard, qtd. in Rasch 2000, 2). It is also quite possible that the program of changing modernity into a postmodernity is no more than an antimodernist and *au fond* pluralist slogan which "affirms an old and respectable modernist motif, for the modern world was always and still is rationalization and pluralization" (Marquard, qtd. in ibid.). In the midst of this controversy and at least, optimistically speaking, until a consensus is reached, Luhmann, contemplating the reality with an unblinking eye, seems to be the best Virgil or Beatrice for us, depending on how we see the world—as *Inferno* or *Paradiso*. Let us follow him and see what he has to say or, rather, what he inspires us to say about the subject close to our hearts—translation.

What are the advantages of Luhmannian social-systemic approach to the study of translation? Here, we can only adumbrate some of them drawing on literature discussing pros and contras of systemic paradigms in sociology (Byrne 1998; Burns 2007). A detailed discussion of all these features will follow (see Conclusion).

Translation can be viewed systemically, and such systemic (holistic) approach presupposes that "complex issues cannot be adequately comprehended in isolation from the wider system of which they are a part" (Burns 2007, 1). This allows a homogenized description of translation as a social phenomenon—or as a social function system in its own right. At the same time, translation can be placed within a larger system of similar types of activity or phenomena, being viewed as subsystem within larger semiotic and social systems. Translation can be systemically juxtaposed with other social (sub)systems (the economy, law, art, religion, medicine, etc.). Such systemic thinking prepares us better for what is unknown, uncertain at present, in the state of constant flux, or not (adequately) studied. Systemic studies of translation open up possibilities of strategic development of research, overcoming simplistic models of linear causation, according to which "intervention outcomes are relatively straightforward to predict, if only we could get enough of the right sort of evidence" (Burns 2007, 1). To account for all contingencies and their affects, we need to understand the complex dynamics of social systems. Or to put it even more radically: "If we can see what makes the difference, we can make the difference" (Byrne 1998, 42). When Dmitrii Mendeleev introduced his periodical table of chemical elements, the research in chemistry became more consciously directable, if not plannable, aimed at identifying unknown elements, at that point missing from the discovered system of elements—the table, yet predicted by the table as elements which were likely to exist (Strathern 2000, 286–94). Systemic descriptions of translation create a comparable 'table' which can identify missing features of translation as a social-functional phenomenon. Such a table may also help to correlate what seemed to be not correlatable (Even-Zohar 1979, 288). Once again to give an example of Mendeleev's table: it helps bring forth and better explain common properties of chemical elements such as types of alkali or inert gases. Systemic approaches to translation also help see and

explain its relatedness to other similar social activities. Systemics helps us make sense of fragmented reality by finding connecting patterns. Systemic approaches enable us to identify unintended features of translation activity. Systemic macroparadigms are often criticized for disregarding human conscious volition (Webb, Schirato, and Danaher 2002, 32–3); yet they have their advantage of better describing unintended affects of human activity. Finally, systemic approaches help us shed some more light on crises in the domain of translation practice and theory.

## Thinking Bigger

> True scientific revolutions amount to more than new discoveries; they alter the concepts on which science is based.
>
> —Paul Davies. *The Cosmic Blueprint*

There are different levels of theory. There may be distinguished, if arbitrarily and only heuristically, macro-, meso-, and microtheories (Stein and Varela 1993, 3–7). Macrotheory provides a large-scale and imaginative canvas, which may serve as conceptual scaffolding applicable to a large portion of a discipline or even to several disciplines. Among classical examples of such theories are Lovelock's hypothesis that the Earth is "the [self-regulating] superorganism composed of all life tightly coupled with the air, the oceans, and the surface rocks" (the Gaia hypothesis; Lovelock 1995, x) in biology, chemistry, physics, meteorology; or Einstein's theory of relativity in physics and astronomy. Macrotheories are of paradigmatic significance and practical research is underpinned by them as a sort of scientific worldview. It is usually so deeply ingrained in scientists' minds that they take it for granted, sometimes confusing it with reality. Macrotheories are *rarae aves* in scientific history and they have to fight their way into the mindset of practicing scientists. Macrotheories boldly challenge the existing macrotheories absorbed by the scientific community from the formative schooling years. Such view of macrotheories echoes Kuhn's idea of scientific revolutions (1996). It is, therefore, hardly surprising that "the mortality rate of macrotheories is high, and their proponents are often relegated to that limbo that practicing [scientists] call 'just philosophy'" (Stein and Varela 1993, 3).

Mesotheories are more common phenomena. Usually, they apply to only particular domains. They catch on faster and easier because they connect directly to scientific practice where it is crucial what mesotheory governs interpretation of a particular set of experimentally obtained data. One of the characteristic features of mesotheories is that they "can be included in a seminar without the lecturer being considered impolite or vain" in contrast to macrotheories the presentation of which should be backed up with impressive credentials of the speaker in order "to enable him to get away with it (a Nobel prize, for instance)" (ibid., 4).

Microtheories deal with specific phenomena. They are a kind of scientific cabotage, navigation in coastal waters, not daring to go too far; they are tailored to account "in some conceptually clean or analytically astute manner" for concrete empirical observations (ibid., 4). Microtheories are tolerated and even respected among practicing scholars; they are generally seen as useful, concrete, and down-to-earth. They provide the subject matter for the majority of talks among scientists and scholars in conference presentations or in coffee breaks between them. The major drawback of microtheories is that "they may be so low-flying as to be boring, except for a limited circle of initiates" (ibid., 4). Meso- and especially microtheories remind us of Kuhn's description of normal science with its focus on problem solving (1996).

In this classification, Luhmann's SST may well be qualified as a macrotheory. Indeed, the theory not only created a paradigm shift in sociology, but also sparked off new research well beyond (Knodt 1995, xiv–v; Berg and Schmidt 2000; Gripp-Hagelstange 2000; Moeller 2006, 292; Seidl and Becker 2005; Seidl 2005; Ihlen, Ruler, and Fredriksson 2009, 187–211). One of such domains that took on SST is of special interest for us in the present study: it is Translation Studies (TS).

Taking into consideration the 'natural' course of the development of ideas proposed by scholars within the descriptive and sociocritical branch of TS, it was only to be expected that one of the next logical steps would be not only a 'sociological turn' but also a social-systemic approach to the study of translational phenomena. Curiously enough, DTS (descriptive TS) started with systems (or to be more precise, with polysystems). Yet despite the fact that for more than a decade now, a specter of Luhmann's SST has been haunting TS, the scholarly community seems to share sociologists' doubts and have developed similar phobias (cf. Seidl and Becker 2005, 10; Lukas Sosoe's introduction in Luhmann 2001, xiv–v). To begin with, one is dismayed by Luhmann's dense, if not downright (allegedly) obfuscating, style of writing, to the extent that one doubts if it is really worth reading a couple of hundred arid pages before one can only hope to begin to understand anything. And then, who knows, even if that finally happens, what one could get out of this abstruse theory for one's own research! As a result, apart from Theo Hermans's attempts to apply Luhmann's SST to studying translation (1997; 1999; 2007a; 2007b), not much has been done (see Section 2.1).

TS turns out to be no exception to the rule, formulated by Jean Paul and quoted by Luhmann: "In the realm of knowledge—different from the physical realm—sound always arrives earlier than light" (Seidl and Becker 2005, 54). The words 'social systems theory' and 'autopoiesis' are familiar, but discussions of them hardly draw on Luhmann's own writings. Richard Jenkins writes about a similar situation with the study of Pierre Bourdieu's works, resulting in their limited appreciation ("tunnel vision"), superficiality, and simply wrong interpretations of some key concepts (2002, 12).

The possibility of the application of Luhmann's ideas to the study of translation is still explored only superficially. In fact, TS experts are not at all convinced if these allegedly 'antihumanist' ideas (Moeller 2006, ix; Horster 1992, 10) are of any relevance at all when the crusade for *translator*, not *text* (of translation) is declared (Pym, Shlesinger, and Jettmarová 2003, 2).

The present study purports to probe into theoretical implications of SST for the study of translation as a social phenomenon. In this sense, this study is located on the borderline between sociology, branching out into TS, and TS in its sociological or, maybe, social-systemic turn. Today, social theory goes beyond the boundaries of sociology; this fact is borne out by numerous applications of sociological theories in other social sciences (Turner 2009, 559). Martin Fuchs, however, dethrones sociology as "the master of all discourse on the social," who dictates other disciplines how to theorize the social, and promises that for those sociologists, who would take heed, "there is much to gain from including sociological considerations of translation" (2009, 26). The rapprochement, however, should be mutual: Luhmann's macrotheory of social systems helps translation students think bigger about translation and move to a higher plane—from micro—to mesotheories.

## FASTEN YOUR SEATBELTS, OR BEWARE OF VERTIGINOUS WOOZINESS

> The wind [ . . . ] whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits.
>
> —*Ecclesiastes*

In the Introduction to their groundbreaking treatise *Autopoiesis: The Organization of the Living* (in Maturana and Varela 1980), Humberto R. Maturana and Francisco J. Varela wrote that, on the one hand, "notions arising in the domain of description do not pertain to the constitutive organization of the unity (phenomenon) to be explained" and, on the other, "an explanation may take different forms according to the nature of the phenomenon explained" (p. 75). Thus, they clearly kept apart what Luhmann would theorize as the first- and second-order observations, that is, the phenomena described/observed and the description/observation, or observations of operations and observations of observations. Yet they also noted that there is a connection between the nature of the two: the form of an explanation depends (at least to an extent) on the nature of the phenomenon explained. Luhmann introduces the circularity not only as an object of his theory. His SST becomes a circularly designed theory as well: "A universal theory observes its objects, and itself as one of its objects" (Luhmann 1995, xlviii; cf. Knodt 1995, xiii; Drepper 2003, 24). This circularity of theory is reminiscent of George Spencer Brown's images of the snake eating itself and the dog chasing its own tail (1973, 106) as metaphors of "the relentless project of

human knowing" (Cooper 2005, xi). Thus, circularity begets circularity—the circularity of the object of description and the circularity of description itself, resulting in a sort of double circularity.

There is another source for circularity or loop-like trajectories of discourse. One may consider circularity a necessary evil of presentation or description of a complex theory (if circularity is any worse than linearity). In the Preface to the English edition of his *Social Systems*, Luhmann explained that in order to create a conceptually precise comprehensive social theory, one has to make it abstract and complex. He likened such a project to Lernaean Hydra with her nine heads, each one of which, when cut off, produced two more. In a comprehensive theory, each explanation calls for supporting explanations (1995, xxxvii).

Eventually, the theory reaches such a degree of complexity that it cannot be presented in a linear fashion. That is why Luhmann opts for "a polycentric (and accordingly polycontextural) theory in an acentrically conceived world and society" (1995, li). Naturally, the theory is presented as a printed book with a particular sequence of chapters. Yet the sequence may be different, because "the theory's design resembles a labyrinth more than a freeway off into the sunset" (ibid., lii). Thus we end up with what I have referred to above as double circularity—of the object of description and of the description itself. Indeed, one has to be prepared even for a possible dizziness. Although in what follows I have tried to make as few causes for dizziness as possible, it was, however, impossible to avoid some of the loops. I cannot promise easy reading, but I do hope the reader will find the book inspiring. I, therefore, hope, as did Luhmann, "for readers who will bring with them enough patience, imagination, intelligence, and curiosity" (ibid., lii).

Some help may be found by the reader in the following publications where Luhmann's theory is presented with helpful explanations and examples:

Ferrarese, Estelle. 2007. *Niklas Luhmann, une introduction*. Paris: Pocket. (In French)

Hayoz, Nicolas. 1991. *Société, politique et état dans la perspective de la sociologie systemique de Niklas Luhmann*. Genève: Université de Genève.

Knodt, Eva M. 1995. "Foreword," in Luhmann 1995, ix–xxxvi.

Moeller, Hans-Georg. 2006. *Luhmann Explained: From Souls to Systems*. Chicago: Open Court.

Rasch, William. 2000. *Niklas Luhmann's Modernity: The Paradoxes of Differentiation*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.

Seidl, David, and Kai Helge Becker (eds.). 2005. *Niklas Luhmann and Organization Studies*. Liber: Liber & Copenhagen Business School Press.

Seidl, David. 2005. *Organisational Identity and Self-Transformation: An Autopoietic Perspective*. Aldershot, UK, Burlington, VT, USA: Ashgate.

It is highly recommendable for those reading in German and willing to come to know Luhmann's theory firsthand to turn to a series of lectures Luhmann gave at the University of Bielefeld, in the winter semester of 1991–2, published posthumously by Dirk Baecker (see Luhmann 2009). The text is easier to read than the majority of Luhmann's works thanks to the original oral delivery of lectures and their introductory nature. I also refer the reader to the Glossary of key SST terms which I have provided at the end of this book.

My purport is very different from what the above listed and a number of other similar publications (many of them in German, see a bibliography in Krause 1996, 211–27) were aimed at—not to explain or popularize Luhmann's SST but to apply it to translation. Therefore, I will consider only those notions and concepts which I find applicable to translation. At that, I will try to tease out whatever potential, relevant to TS, I will be able to detect (not exhaust!). It is hardly necessary to add, that in order to get a better and fuller understanding of Luhmannian notions, one has to turn to Luhmann's own publications for, indeed, no explanation can exhaust the explained phenomenon. This is especially the case when it comes to a theory as complex as SST. In fact, this can be explained in SST's terms: no complexity reduced (and any explanation is a reduced original complexity) is equal to the original complexity.

Finally, I would like to echo Francisco J. Varela (1979, 107) and ask the reader to remember that this study is an attempt to look at translation from a new angle, that it comes to grips with problems which verge on philosophy, and that it attempts to theorize such facets of translation that so far have been acknowledged, at most, only intuitively. These aspects are challengingly difficult to tackle. This is an endeavor to map out a new terrain. Some ideas may be found deserving more attention than they are allocated; the reader may even come across some gaping lacunae. It should be stressed, therefore, that my application of SST to translation does not claim to exhaust the theme but, rather, welcomes further considerations, fine-tuning, and full-blown follow-up research projects.

## TRANSLATION: WHAT'S IN THE NAME?

> O Romeo, Romeo! wherefore art thou Romeo?
>
> —William Shakespeare. *Romeo and Juliet*

The last, but far from the least important subject to be discussed in the introductory part is translation, the key notion of TS. What is translation? Defining translation is indeed a damnable task, especially within a theory which defies flat, one-dimensional and linear definitions, yet *volens nolens* we have to start somewhere. It would suffice, for now, to define translation as a semiotically broadly conceived text oriented towards another text, the

orientation being as that of the secondary to the primary.[2] Translation will also mean the process of creating the text. Since mostly, conventionally, translation is thought of as existing in the verbal medium, it should be added the following: my aim is to consider translation in a "much wider and more formal [way] than is conventional" (Bateson 1972, xvii). Unless specified, I understand translation as both (written) translation and (oral) interpreting, both in the above mentioned sense (a text with specific characteristics, which are to be discussed at length in due course, as well as the process of creating such text). Importantly, however, I do not limit the term 'translation' to verbal (intra- or interlingual) mediation. On the contrary, my understanding of translation is prompted by a broader social context of its existence.

I dismiss the foreseeable rejection of such a broad vision of translation on the grounds that there is the risk of blurring the line between translation and other forms of intertextual activity, as a colleague warned me once. I dismiss such rejection, firstly, because the line has been blurred already as back as in 1959 by Roman Jakobson, when he famously presented his triad of translation types—intralingual, interlingual, and intersemiotic, and then this blurring was theorized by Itamar Even-Zohar when he argued for translation to be considered as a special case of transfer (1990, 73–4). Secondly, I dismiss such rejection because, I am afraid, it is prompted not by the concern for the object studied but for the subject objecting, if the pun were permitted: scholars, who are afraid of blurring the line between translation and transfer just because it is *blurring*, are likely to be more concerned for their turf and not for the object they study. In other words, if at some point one finds that translation may be seen not just as a unique phenomenon, but also as a special case of a larger class of phenomena, one should not artificially hold on to one's discipline's out-dated boundaries. Even if one does, somebody will break through and tear another Berlin wall down. If the line between translation and other intertextual activities is in danger, that is the last thing that should concern us: if the line is blurrable, it should be blurred and will inevitably be blurred sooner or later. Indeed, the line is blurred already: "today's situation is much more complex and blurs the boundaries between disciplines to a far greater extent" (Bachmann-Medick 2009, 3; cf. Spivak 2003). Norman Fairclough agrees: "Boundaries between social sciences are weakening"—and writes about a 'linguistic turn' in social theory (1992, 2).

The editors of the collection *Translation Studies at the Interface of Disciplines* (Duarte, Rosa, and Seruya 2006) bravely propose to drop the notion of TS as either a discipline or an interdiscipline. Rather, they suggest considering TS as "a principle of flux," as an interfacing domain with a multiplicity of coexistent language-games, unceasingly intersecting, intermingling, realigning, even clashing, but also cross-fertilizing one another. Moreover, TS should be "a ghost-like presence to haunt us out of enclosures and rigidities" (p. 4).

If translation is seen as an integral part of social life, one may go as far as to conclude that there must be a connection between immediate concerns and needs of a society and translation activities, taking place in that society. Although we should be careful ascribing a direct relationship between social processes and translation activities, it seems likely that whenever we observe activated translation, we may be sure to witness some sort of activation of social processes as well. This suggests how intimately translation is connected with the social.

The above stated connection leads us to overstep the narrow understanding of translation. In his article "Problems and Challenges of Translation in an Age of New Media and Competing Models" (2006, originally published in 1996), José Lambert advocated a broader understanding of the term 'translation' which should include not only autonomous texts, but also text fragments. Otherwise "we implicitly ignore an enormous quantity of texts that are not called translations but that in fact play a key role in our contemporary societies" (p. 142). He writes about the necessity to consider verbal translation as only one of many possible types of communication with a wider understanding of terms 'text', 'equivalence', 'language' (ibid., 142–4).

What follows is founded on principles like those suggested by Lambert. Indeed, limiting translation to its verbal aspects, we ignore an enormous quantity of texts not only in our modern societies, but also in societies of other historical periods. Lambert advocates a semiotically broad definition of translation where "explaining transfer phenomena between non-verbal signs [together with verbal ones] appears simply a question of generality" (Lambert 2006, 143). Susan Göpferich advocates a broader understanding of translation (2004; 2007). Over the last decade, several edited collections, such as Rose (1997), Fenton (2004), Hung and Wakabayashi (2005), and Hermans (2006), as well as an important publication by Maria Tymoczko (2007) problematized narrow conceptions of translation.

However, the question is bound to arise: How can one "conceptualize translation despite its heteronomy?" (Hermans 1999, 137). As one of the possibilities to resolve this problem Theo Hermans suggests to apply Luhmann's SST. Hermans considers translation as a system. Indeed, SST allows us to go beyond declarations about translation as a distinct social activity (whatever the limits of this distinctness may be), but to describe what properties and characteristics of translation make it a distinct social activity among other distinct social activities. Luhmann's keen interest in the systemics of social phenomena and his highly sophisticated conceptual apparatus and methodology are exactly what is needed in order to meet the challenge of conceptualizing translation despite its heteronomy.

However, to understand not only characteristics of translation as a system in itself but also to conceptualize it as a social activity despite the heteronomy of its manifestations, one should see it from the right distance, as it were, that would provide the adequate level of generalization. For translation to be seen as a social phenomenon, it should be considered within a

broader—social—context. Once again, Luhmann's SST comes handy with its well-developed conceptual vocabulary. Luhmann's SST is also universal in its approach, in the sense that it deals with and is applicable to the entire domain of the social; SST is capable of including the whole world in its relationship with the social system (Luhmann 1987, 163–4). In SST terms, translation may be viewed as part of this universalized portrayal of things social or as a 'subsystem' of an overall social system—society.

Systemic study of translation may be traced back to the Tel-Aviv–Leuven school which developed ideas of the Russian formalists who viewed national literature as a polysystem with its evolutionary dynamics and center/periphery relations (Tynianov 1977, 255–81; Even-Zohar 1990). Translation was, however, primarily studied within a national literary system (or, in the exact terminology, "polysystem" since the literary system was seen as composed of several systems). Yet the literary system is but one social system among many others where translation is also actively practiced. No wonder, a broader social perspective of translational practice started to come into view of translation scholars and the role played by translation was considered not only within the national literary system, but also in the overall social system.

Analysis of translation's "guiding difference" (*Leitdifferenz*) as a social subsystem among other subsystems (the economy, education, science, law, politics, religion, etc.) shows that translation's principal function consists in representing anterior discourses "across semiotic boundaries" and at the same time not operating in and for itself, but catering for other systems' interests, hence being heteronomous (Hermans 1999, 142–3). Thus, to account for translation as a heteronomous yet autonomous phenomenon, one has to consider it in a broader context—the entire social system.

Translation as a subsystem has a particular function in the social system. No other function subsystem can fulfill this function, that is to say, no other subsystemic formation can do what translation can. A crucial concept to borrow from Luhmann and to apply to translation as a social activity is *boundary phenomenon*. Hermans's statement that translation going "across semiotic boundaries" does not seem specific enough because his emphasis in the application of Luhmann's system theory is on translation as a system. No doubt, translation can and should be described as a system if we want to conceptualize it despite its heteronomy. (In fact, following Hermans's ideas, Part I of the present work will consider translation as a system.) However, in the defining the *Leitdifferenz* of translation as a system, Hermans inevitably broadens the scope of his consideration. The object of his speculation changes from translation as a system to translation among other systems. He gives examples of interlingual translations and touches upon translation's catering for other systems.

From time to time, in his application of Luhmann's social system theory to translation, Hermans seems to lose sight of the fact that translation is fundamentally social phenomenon, that is, inscribed in a larger system.

Translation's *Leitdifferenz* cannot be formulated unless translation is seen as part and parcel of the overall social system. Even when we discuss translation as a distinct systemic formation—a system in itself, we should always keep in consideration the social system, of which translation is only a subsystem. Translation is a system but only against the backdrop of the system of systems. I argue, therefore, that it is more productive to conceptualize translation as a subsystem whose primary function and *Leitdifferenz* are better understood within the system which is the entire society. Translation is a subsystem within this system. Translation's principal responsibility is to separate the overall system from and at the same time connect the overall system with the environment (Luhmann 1995, 29). Translation opens the system when it facilitates the passage of texts (in the broad semiotic sense) from the environment into the system and makes them available for the system's processing. Yet in that translation filtrates and transforms the texts (e.g., by choosing not to render some of their parts or changing some of their genre characteristics, if we speak about verbal texts or modifying, adapting newly introduced technologies, values and customs, if we assume a broader understanding of translation), translation fully or partially closes the system. One may argue that, strictly speaking, translation's opening and closing the system should be separated as functions from translation's transferring phenomena into/from the system, that they are the functions akin to reconnaissance and censorship of what is to be allowed to cross the system's boundary. However, these functions show that translation always acts on behalf of the commissioning system. Selecting what is worth translating and what is not (reconnaissance and censorship) is, therefore, inseparable from translation, which is always 'socialized' (as any other social phenomenon), that is, it is fully 'pickled' in social communication of the commissioning system, translation expresses the values of the system, immersed in the overall system, inhaling and exhaling only its system's communication. Another argument in favor of considering the functions of opening and closing as indispensible properties of translation will be clear when we will consider translation as communication event (in Section 1.6). Translation always exercises selectivity in deciding what part of the original message to transfer. Hence, opening and closing the system is its intrinsic characteristic.

Whatever is appropriated by the system from its environment is bound to cross the system's 'boundary'. Importantly, boundary is not to be understood simplistically, for example, only as a geo-political frontier (cf. Anderson 1991, 172; Poltermann 1992, 7, footnote 8). There are different levels of boundaries' functioning. In the simplest of possible cases, a social system sees in its environment another system. For example, national geo-political frontiers are most commonly understood as boundaries of a nation qua system with another nation-system. Yet such view of boundaries becomes illusory if we conceptualize economic, political, scientific, or educational interaction which no longer correspond to national frontiers and the notion of systemic boundary should be reconsidered as moving

inside each particular function system and what was seen as interiorized by national boundaries is seen as bounded functionally (Luhmann 1995, 30–1). A nation-state qua system may interact with its environment by waging wars against other nation-states, by sending diplomatic and other types of missions, by concluding peace treaties or treaties of commerce. In all these cases, the most conspicuous boundary crossing is crossing geo-political frontiers. But crossing occurs within people, carriers of their respective national communications. An envoy sent abroad becomes the locus of the respective social system's meeting with its environment.

For the discussion at hand, it is important to stress that translation is always a factor in these across-boundary dealings of the system with its environment. Translation may manifest itself not only on the verbal level: the boundaries between socio-cultural worldviews use translation in trying to make sense of each other.

Luhmann speaks of a world society of modernity (1997, 145–71). This world society is function-based in the sense that different function systems act internationally. Geo-political boundaries cannot stop these function systems from establishing their own system-functional boundaries. The economy establishes its boundaries worldwide through the international, worldwide market or international business organizations representing fewer national interests and more interests of business. Boundary is to be understood here as business's operational independency (or in social-systemic terms, operational closure). Boundary, however, is constantly crossed because different interacting historical communities and their respective economic subsystems within the overall worldwide economic system need to be harmonized. There are still issues of intercultural communication in the globalized world. Luhmann argues that modernity is aware of multiculturalism (1997, 170). Such awareness inevitably leads to a higher appreciation of translation as a necessary means that makes function-based world society's functioning possible. Intercultural boundaries do not stop the economic worldwide system from forming and developing, but they make boundary crossing and translation as mediation indispensable.

Translation can be conceptualized as the meeting point of the system with its environment (and systems in the environment). Translation exercises its function of opening the system to and/or closing it from the environment. This social function of translation allows us to homogenize various types of transfer that a social system uses for its existence. Translation facilitates transfers between the system and the environment. Thus, translation as a subsystem plays the role of a boundary phenomenon within the system. Translation is responsible for the passage of texts (in a broad semiotic sense) or elements thereof from the 'outside', 'environment' into the system. If we do not take the social function of translation or limit its application only to verbal transfers and/or to complete verbal transfers ('full texts'), we run a risk of distorting the studied phenomena or losing the scale of social-systemic analysis.

One may doubt if we really need to homogenize translation as a phenomenon. But this is comparable to denying the project of discovering and formulating most general natural laws as opposed to describing every studied phenomenon individually. All things falling to the ground can be said to obey the law of gravity, but somebody may say that it is too simplistic because there is a difference in the speed and trajectory of how a feather falls down as compared to a cannon ball. All depends on what we want to demonstrate: the universality of certain phenomena or their specificity. One does not exclude the other; rather, they complement each other. Luhmann's SST attempts to show the universality of social phenomena's properties; there are other theories which show these phenomena's specificity. The former approach has been under way in TS all along. On the one hand, individual cases have been considered in their relation to universal pursuits of formulating or questioning more or less general principals of translation. On the other hand, there have been attempts to formulate general principles, laws, of translation (e.g., Toury 1982; 1995) or discussing the existence of translation universals (Mauranen and Kujamäki 2004). Yet there have been doubts about such generalized and homogenized conceptualizations of translation.

Doubts about the possibility of generalizing in the social domain are by no means a matter of concern only on the part of translation students. In his critical stance against functionalism in social sciences, despite admitting the sophistication and importance of the work of some authors such as Luhmann and Habermas within the trend, Anthony Giddens, a leading British sociologist, rejects "a fondness" for evolutionary style of sociological theories, drawing on natural scientific views of society (which is to be traced back to sociological theories considerably earlier than Parsonian (Hirst 2010)). He denies point blank that generalizations are at all possible in social science:

> There are no universal laws in the social sciences, and there will not be any—not, first and foremost, because [ . . . ] the causal conditions involved in generalizations about human social conduct are inherently unstable in respect of the very knowledge (or beliefs) that actors have about the circumstances of their own action. (1984, xxxii)

It would not be productive or even constructive for the study at hand to undertake a discussion of Giddens's scepticism, all the more so that holding the generalizers' views as "beliefs" or expressing his objections in the Indicative mood, Giddens does not make his own beliefs, that there are no universal laws in the social sciences and there will be none, empirically established and proved facts. Pushed for a final answer, one has to admit that both positions, that of the generalizers' and that of the hardcore empiricists', like Giddens, are no more than 'beliefs' and the research, based on whichever position, is, first, conducted in hope of better understanding of the social and, second, is most probably neither pure generalizing (which

Giddens makes sound as groundless fideism) nor pure empiricism, as, by the way, Giddens's own research with a considerable amount of generalizing (for example, his generalization about non-existence of general social laws) proves very well. It is also a question, at what point a statement leaves the ground of empiricism and enters the realm of generalizations. It may be as difficult to answer this question as to draw a clear and indisputable line between translation and non-translation, as is obvious in Giddens's following statement: "private property, a cluster of rights of ownership, can be 'translated' into industrial authority, or modes of sustaining managerial control" (1984, xxxii). The empirically observed private property is, after all, 'translatable' into a more general concept of industrial authority, i.e., modes of managerial control. Is it not what a generalizer does when, based on observed empirical data, s/he draws conclusions of a more general nature and conceptualizes concrete facts as manifestations of authority, control, etc. (See also Norbert Wiener's answer to objections like those voiced by Giddens, discussed in Section 1.5.)

## GOALS AND STRUCTURE

> I hoped that some new image might propel me past the jaded puzzle to the other side, to ideas strange and compelling.
>
> —Edward O. Wilson

What is it exactly that we want to see with the help of Luhmann's SST? What are the goals of the present study? It should be emphasized that my overall goal is neither to popularize SST (cf. Fuchs 1992) nor to scrutinize the technicalities of Luhmann's theory-constructing (cf. Barben 1996) nor to undertake the study of individual concepts of SST (cf. Stark 1994) or in comparison with other concepts in SST or beyond (cf. Künzler 1989; Roberts 1995, 84–9; Albert, Cederman, and Wendt 2010). Rather, I will attempt to approach Luhmann's theory with only one intention of gauging its potential for the study of translation as a social-systemic phenomenon. In this respect, my approach is very different from Hans J. Vermeer's who, as it seems to me, undertook disparate tasks of explaining what he understood in Luhmann's theory, applying it to translation, and, at the same time, trying to critically engage in assessing Luhmann's theorizing of the social (see Section 2.1 for a detailed analysis of Vermeer's publications on the applicability of SST to the study of translation).

As any research in translation theory, I aim at shedding more light on the nature of translation, its properties, especially those revealed in its social praxis. My study is, however, much less a sociological study of translation during a certain period in a certain place, although I do provide some time-locus specific examples, than it is testing a conceptual framework, Luhmann's SST.

I argue that SST allows us to pose questions which, without it, go not only unanswered, but also unasked. Together with Luhmann, I intend to adopt the "experimental attitude" and "look at the world from the denaturalized perspective of its improbability" (Knodt 1995, xvi). Chaos is more probable than order, yet in certain circumstances order becomes not only probable but also possible. This is the stance which informs Luhmannian vision of society, and I will look from this perspective at translation. The questions, which underlie my study, are the following:

- How is translation, being improbable, made probable? That is to say, how is connecting two (or more) different phenomena/parties made possible?
- How, of all sorts of social activities, does translation emerge as a specific activity?
- What are the internal mechanisms that made/make translation possible?
- Upon what basis are different social activities categorized as translational and said to belong to the same type of activity?
- What is translation's contribution to making the improbability of social order probable?

All these questions form two groups. The first three refer to the internal structure of translation and its nature (understood as a set of properties producing certain results). The last two questions regard translation as a part, or subsystem, of a larger social domain, which I, following Luhmann, would term the overall social system. What is the function of translation in the overall system? If we answer this question, we will be able to define translation as a social activity.

Luhmann's SST provides us with a sophisticated conceptual apparatus. It helps us, first, pose challenging questions and, second, guide us to answering them. Luhmann's theory as well as the theories which served him as sources of inspiration ask most fundamental questions, so fundamental that, in most theories, they are taken for granted, ignored, or forgotten. Yet it is a matter of scientific honesty at least to make an attempt to raise and discuss them. It is not an easy path to choose, yet it is so much more exciting. That is why we follow Robert Frost's logic who, famously, out of two diverging roads took "the one less travelled by, / And that has made all the difference." (2010, 9)

Chapter by chapter, section by section, I will consider Luhmann's concepts and sometimes I will look for more details in his sources. The two groups of the questions formulated above inform all my study. I will address the first group in Part I and the second in Part II. The groups are closely related, and the separation between the two is made only for clarity's sake. This is, however, not always possible and a certain amount of overlap is unavoidable.

In Chapter 1, I start with a brief historical survey. I present the history of the concept of autopoiesis and the systemic roots of SST. I also discuss such key concepts as system vs. environment, allo- vs. autopoietic systems; I apply them to translation and present the criteria which allow us to view translation as an autopoietic system. In Chapter 2, I survey sociologically informed TS literature and primarily publications where Luhmann's SST is applied to the study of translation. Then, building on the notions introduced in Chapter 1, I explain different levels of observation of translation: translation vs. everything else (system vs. environment); translation among other social systems (system vs. system); and finally, translation as a subsystem in the overall social system (subsystem vs. system). I analyze what I term 'translational communication event' which is the key concept enabling us to understand how translation is possible, what mechanisms are at work in translation's mediation between interacting social parties. I proceed then to defining elements, relations and components of translation qua system. Finally, in Chapter 2, I problematize putting actors in the center of studies of translation and discuss a related question of structural couplings.

Chapter 3 starts with discussing the general problem of constructionism. The foundation is laid for further discussion of the concept *observation*. Translation is shown to observe itself at two levels—observation of operations and observation of observations. An important notion *re-entry* is introduced. The evolution of translation qua system is theorized as translation's acquiring the second-order observation on top of the first-order observation.

Chapter 4 shows translation as a system operating in the medium of meaning, producing a limitless variety of forms which, in turn, undergo metamorphoses and cluster together. That is why in order to define translation, one has to define a distinction. I also analyze three non-TS applications of the vocabulary of translation studies: by Joachim Renn, by Michel Callon and Bruno Latour, and by Luhmann. I discuss why their application of translation vocabulary in sociological contexts is possible.

Part I on translation as a system is concluded with a chapter on translation's systemic binary code and programs that provide its flexibility over time and space (Chapter 5).

Part II proposes answers to the questions about the relationship of translation with the overall society and about its function and place in this complex social formation. In other words, translation is viewed as one of social subsystems. Translation's function in society is to facilitate social interaction. In Chapter 6, Luhmann's metaphor of social catalysis is elaborated and translation is theorized as a social catalyst.

In Chapter 7, another Luhmannian concept, *boundary phenomenon*, is applied to translation. Here, I also turn to Spencer Brown's and Varela's laws of form. This chapter is an attempt to show the intrinsically dynamic nature of translation.

Chapter 8 considers translation as a factor of social evolution. Luhmann views social evolutionary cycle as comprised of three stages, or

aspects—variation, selection, and stabilization. Translation is shown to play different roles at different stages.

In Chapter 9, translation is analyzed in its structural coupling with the subsystem of politics. A fine difference is to be made between translation being equal to any other system in that no other system can fulfill its function—mediation and translation being subordinate to internal systemic communication, notably to the subsystem of politics. At some periods of history, translation may be summoned to change or even subvert internal systemic communication in its dominant discourse.

Finally, in Chapter 10, drawing on Spencer Brown's laws of form, translation's behavior within the form and within what can be termed 'superform' is scrutinized. Translation facilitates interaction of the two sides of the form. Drawing a boundary necessitates crossing it. Yet translation also creates an illusion of not crossing the boundary between the sides of the form. I conclude the chapter with demonstrating the unique position of translation in the form: bestriding the boundary and observing both sides.

In the Conclusion, I summarize the results of my research and suggest possible lines of further sociological study of translation.

# Part I

# System

# 1 Autopoiesis of Translation

> Either the body system interacting with its environment succeeds in continuing its operations and thus lives on, or it does not succeed and subsequently dies, and its structures connected to the performance of life-preserving processes dissolve.
>
> —Fritz B. Simon

In the present study, translation will be considered as an autopoietic system. Luhmann borrowed the notion 'autopoiesis' from biology. Chilean biologist Humberto R. Maturana is credited with introducing the term into biology to denote a specific ability of living organisms to exist as self-referential and self-reproducing systems. Apparently, however, according to Hans Rudi Fischer's historical analysis, the basic idea of self-organization was already known to Immanuel Kant who wrote that parts of a whole form an entity because they constitute both the cause and effect of their whole. Among the first to observe self-organization in the twentieth century were electrical engineers W. A. Clark and B. G. Farley. From the end of the 1950s, Heinz von Foerster and many others conducted the focused research of the phenomenon of self-organization (Foerster and Poerksen 2002, 90–1).

## 1.1. DON QUIXOTE'S PRAXIS AND MATURANA'S POIESIS

> New terms must be coined to make the concepts behind them conspicuous.
>
> —Itamar Even-Zohar

> We look for a way of speaking about the rough unmapped terrain, even just a name or a phrase that calls attention to the object of our attention.
>
> —Edward O. Wilson

A short history how the neologism *autopoiesis* was coined would not be amiss. It appeared some time in the early 1970s when Humberto Maturana and his co-worker Francisco Varela were looking for a term that would aptly capture the circular organization of living organisms which these two scientists discovered. As Maturana himself put it:

> We were unhappy with the expression 'circular organization', and we wanted a word that would by itself convey the central feature of the

> organization of the living, which is autonomy. (Maturana and Varela 1980, xvii)

It so happened that one day Maturana had a conversation with a friend, José Bulnes. They talked about Bulnes's essay on Cervantes's *Don Quixote de la Mancha*. In his essay, Bulnes discussed Don Quixote's dilemma, whether to engage in *praxis*, that is, to take action and follow the path of arms or to prefer *poiesis*, which, on the contrary, meant to give himself to creation. Don Quixote preferred the path of *praxis*, but ironically, his ruminations led Maturana to the other option—*poiesis*. Maturana realized the power of the term *poiesis* and, based on it, coined the term *autopoiesis*, which was assigned the key position in his and Varela's groundbreaking conceptual approach to the study of the living. This term *autopoiesis* had no history and, therefore, "could directly mean what takes place in the dynamics of the autonomy proper to living systems" (ibid., xvii).

Autopoiesis was not a whim or what Giovanni Sartori called "novitism," that is, a scientist's desire to be original at any cost and engage in unwarranted name-inventing (Collier and Gerring 2009, 63). It is clear that in Maturana and Varela's case the word did not come before a new concept had been conceived, their "right word" was "part and parcel of the concept" (ibid., 68). Sometimes, an outstanding wordsmith like William Golding who gave James Lovelock the name of his hypothesis 'Gaia' is welcomed to participate in finding the right word (Lovelock 2000, 3, 240–1).

To be sure, Maturana and Varela were not the only ones struggling against words which trap the researcher in scientific traditions. Bruno Latour, one of the authors of the actor-network sociological theory, experienced similar frustrations. While creating their actor-network theory, he and his colleagues felt that they needed to rid themselves of such categories as power, knowledge, profit, and capital, "because they divide up a cloth that we want seamless in order to study as we choose" (1987, 223). Therefore, they either assigned new meanings to existing words, such as *spokesperson*, or coined new words, such as *actant*.

Also, Pierre Bourdieu said that he was always engaged in "a permanent struggle against ordinary language" (1988, 149). Bourdieu, James Coleman, Gary Becker, and Robert Putnam (although each in his own way) borrowed the economic notion *capital* and applied it to sociological studies. This provided all of them with the possibility to theorize social phenomena in a new way (Field 2003, 11–40).

Going back to Maturana and Varela, the term *autopoiesis* became a real eureka for them. It made talking about the self-organization of the living so much simpler and helped them escape the "always-gaping trap of not saying anything new because the language does not permit it": by revolutionizing their conceptual vocabulary, they could navigate their innovative course and "generate a new tradition" (Maturana and Varela 1980, xvii).

And a new tradition was indeed generated. In the wake of their discovery, a new school in sociology was established. Today, this sociological school is primarily associated with the name of Niklas Luhmann. His theory has also been applied to a number of other disciplines within the humanities: in the theory of law and organizational studies; in political science; in the studies of art, literature, and mass media; and in philosophy, to name just a few.

## 1.2. FREE FROM THE IRON MAIDEN'S EMBRACE

In his foreword to Maturana and Varela's treatise *Autopoiesis and Cognition*, Sir Stafford Beer gave a brief survey of how, in the history of Western science, the synthesis was superseded by analysis. The result is that mechanism, dualism, and categorization still reign supreme. In such worldview, systemic interrelatedness is annihilated, relations fall out of sight, and synthesis is relegated to poetry and mysticism (Maturana and Varela 1980, 63–4). Sir Stafford Beer's diagnosis is that scholarship has been trapped in the secure embrace of this iron maiden. Yet he sees the concept of *autopoiesis* as an attempt to free science from this embrace by re-introducing synthesis and systematicity into present-day scholarship.

Kenneth E. Boulding suggested another colorful metaphor expressing the urgent need of systemic studies. He saw general systems theory as "the skeleton of science," that is, a framework of individual disciplines and multifarious foci of scientific research. This would help overcome ever-growing fragmentation of scientific knowledge. He also wittily remarked that the metaphor has its other meaning: general systems theory may also be seen as a skeleton in the cupboard of modern science. The latter fails to systematize all the data it has collected, yet is unwilling to admit its failure. Exacerbating the embarrassment by making painfully clear that simplistic mechanical explanations would not work, general systems theory should not be seen, however, only in its negative function; its positive, instructive, function is to be appreciated as well: it shows us *where* to go. Boulding concludes: "The skeleton must come out of the cupboard before its dry bones can live" (1968, 10).

Following the main focus of general systems theory, which one of its fathers Ludwig von Bertalanffy traces back to the end of 1930s (1968, 13), Maturana and Varela state that their purpose is to understand living systems' organization in relation to such systems' unitary character. This is possible by concentrating not on properties of components of the living organization but on processes and relations between these processes, which are realized through components. They differentiate between two types of phenomena requiring different kinds of description. While studying the trajectory of a falling body, we focus on the properties of matter and on the relevant physical laws (the kinetic and gravitational laws). While studying

the organization of a plant, however, we deal with relations and laws of the conduct of relations. In the former case, the explanation takes as its elements bodies and their properties. In the latter case, the explanation is built upon descriptions of relations and their relations, no matter what bodies are involved and what their nature is. Maturana and Varela state that the object of their study is the organization of living systems, which is relation-based, and, therefore, requires the second type of description. Therefore, to distinguish between classes or types of living systems would be superfluous (Maturana and Varela 1980, 75–6).

Arguably, to study translation requires the same relational and holistic type of description (Garfinkel 1987, 202–4, 210; Yates 1987, 1–14). In order to prove my point, I will turn to Sir Stafford Beer's foreword again. In the subsection "In Contention," he develops Maturana and Varela's ideas further by extrapolating the concept of *autopoiesis* to the social domain. Beer writes that many social institutions may be described as autopoietic and, therefore, living. He admits that this sounds odd, but says that this "cannot be helped" and adds that, although Varela and Maturana may hold their own discovery at arms length, what is at stake is not the word "alive." According to Beer, "what does matter is that the social institution has *identity* in the biological sense; it is not just the random assemblage of interested parties that it is thought to be" (Maturana and Varela 1980, 71).

Such broad conception of *autopoiesis* makes it clear what line of reasoning might have led Luhmann to the idea of the social as autopoietically organized. Closer to the subject of the present study, hardly anybody would argue that translation is a social phenomenon. As a social phenomenon, translation may also be described as autopoietically organized. Hence, the emphasis is to be laid on translation as a relationally structured phenomenon. This understanding creates a breach with the traditional non-systemic description of translation.

## 1.3. MACHINES WITH CIRCULAR CLOSURES

> Study relations that give rise to processes, independent of their embodiment. In other words: become a cybernetician in its interesting and ample sense of the word.
>
> —Francisco J. Varela

Maturana and Varela define living organisms as broadly conceived machines (1980, 77–84).[1] Heinz von Foerster sees the usefulness of the concept *machine* in its abstract sense of a functional unit in that it disciplines the researcher to identify the studied unit's structural and functional components. This notion and its "methodological relatives," such

as concepts *transcript, en- and de-coding, computation*, contributed to a better understanding of a great deal of objects of scientific research (Foerster 1981, 178).

The most important characteristic of machines is unity ensured by the network of relations, that is interactions and transformations into which components of the machine enter in order to constitute the machine as a unity. This type of relations between components is referred to as the organization of the machine. The actual material components are secondary in the sense that an autopoietic unity can be 'made' of different types of components. It cannot be overemphasized that to describe the organization of a machine, or system, is to shift from the specificity of the properties of its components to the relations between the components, to what makes the machine a unity. In this sense, the organization of the machine is said to be independent of the properties of its components (ibid., 77).

Note that Maturana and Varela understand the term 'machine' as interchangeable with the term 'system'. It is also to be noted that the organization of machines is not dependant on the properties of its components. This explains why, among other things, human society and social systems can be devoid of consciousness while human beings are conscious. Also, this makes us question the direct link implied between translation processes and translators. But I leave off this highly controversial matter at this intriguing point for now because first I have to show that all the above said about self-reproducing machines is applicable to translation.

Machines, or systems, may be either autopoietic or allopoietic. The term *autopoiesis* is composed of two Greek roots: *auto*—self and *poiein*—to produce. Maturana and Varela define autopoietic machines as organized and unified networks of processes of production of components which continuously regenerate and realize their own network by interacting and undergoing transformations. The produced components also constitute the machine as a distinct unity in the space of the components' existence by specifying the topological domain in which such a network is realized (ibid., 78–9). Thus, an autopoietic machine or system "determines its own making due to a network of reactions [or relations—*S.T.*] which take place within its own well-defined boundary" (Luisi 1993, 19). This makes the autopoietic organization a circular organization and, moreover, a circular or self-referential closure.

To understand what 'self-referential closure' means is easier when we compare autopoietic machines with allopoietic ones. The term *allopoietic* is coined from the root *poiein*, which we already know, and the root *allo* which means (an)other. A car is typical example of the allopoietic machine. There is also an organization with its particular concatenation of processes. Yet these processes do not produce the components which make the car a unity. The components of a car are the result of other processes, external in relation to the car's operation. Thus, allopoietic systems are dependent on their 'outside' for their production, whereas autopoietic systems operate

by forming a circular closure. In biological autopoietic systems, operational closure refers to the containment of the system's operations within its boundary. The operations form a circle where components determine the system's boundary, the system generates a reaction network (or a network of operations) which produces components; the components determine the boundary of the system and so on and so forth.

Importantly, components of an autopoietic machine are in dynamic relations. That is why a crystal cannot be considered as autopoietically organized. Although the components of a crystal are organized in such a way as to define it as a crystal of a certain kind and thereby specify its unity (in the physical space), they are static. The network of processes of production of components specifies the components, which constitute the network's organization and which undergo constant change (Maturana and Varela 1980, 80).

Although autopoietic systems are operationally closed, they are interactionally open. They exchange matter, energy and information with their environment. This is, however, only interactional openness, not operational. On the operational level, it would be incorrect to talk about the autopoietic system's receiving inputs from the environment. The environment only causes perturbations (or irritations) of the system. Some of these perturbations trigger internal operational responses in the system, yet they cannot determine the system's operations.

Internally, autopoietic systems reproduce themselves by virtue of a particular structural mechanism—their self-organization. The self-organization, that is, the system's dynamic makeup, the interacting structures of which the autopoietic system is composed, is a result of the system's internal operations. Yet the system evolves by growing in complexity as it observes and makes sense of its complex environment. Following George Spencer Brown, Luhmann understands the term 'observation' at its highest level of abstraction. Observation is not reduced to optical observation but is defined as any operation that is based on classifying all phenomena as intrinsic or extrinsic in relation to the observed operation.

The system's observation poses new "reference problems" leading to creation of new functions and respective function subsystems (Luhmann 2000a, 138). Interactions of the system with its environment, which acquire the character of reciprocal dependencies, are referred to as structural couplings. Such are interactions of translation with human psychic systems or with other social subsystems, for example legal translation is structurally coupled with the legal subsystem. Structural couplings are an important mechanism of mutual adaptation of the system to its environment and of the environment to the system. It is important to bear this in mind when we consider two autopoietic systems which come into contact and, while constituting environment for each other, adapt to each other. Continual interactions between such systems through mutual perturbations determine the systems' range of allowable perturbations within which they can

operate without loosing their identity (i.e., without disintegrating as distinct unities).

To summarize, there are two principal features of autopoietic systems: autopoiesis, (re)production of the system's elements as such, and the system's self-organization, its self-(re)structuring.

## 1.4. LUHMANN AND AUTOPOIESIS

> I laid a foundation, and someone else is building on it.
>
> —St. Paul. *First Epistle to Corinthians*

In the previous section, I have already made some excursions into Luhmann's vision of autopoiesis. In this section, I will discuss some of the most important differences between the concept of autopoiesis in biology and in Luhmann's SST.

Although Maturana and Varela considered possibilities of applying the concept of autopoiesis to the study of phenomena outside biology, they were skeptical about the direct applicability of the concept to such domains as sociology. Yet such attempts were made. We have seen in Section 1.2 what Sir Stafford Beer wrote about Maturana and Varela's reservations. (Some other references can be found in Seidl 2005, 7, footnotes 29, 30.)

Luhmann's application of autopoiesis to the realm of the social is different from the attempts made by other scholars in that, before considering social phenomena from the viewpoint of autopoiesis, he radically generalizes the concept. For him, autopoietic systems may be both living and non-living. What all they have in common is that they exist and build themselves as self-referential closures. This leads Luhmann to distinguishing different types of autopoietic systems. The following three types are distinguished: livings systems (or organisms), psychic systems, and social systems. In contrast to Maturana and Varela, who studied primarily the autopoiesis of living systems, Luhmann was primarily concerned with social systems. In his theory, the latter can be interpersonal interactions (for instance, conversations, or "minute" social systems in Erving Goffman's terminology (1990, 235)), or organizations, or larger social formations such as societies, including the totality of all individual social systems—world society.

The heuristic-theoretical separation of systems does not mean that they are separate in reality (as either caricaturing or misunderstanding critics of Luhmann's allegedly 'dehumanizing' stance think or make others think). For example, human beings combine in themselves all the three types of autopoietic systems. The body represents living systems. The psycho (mind) is a psychic system. Finally, there is a social component which enables communication to pass through a particular individual and which belongs to a social system. Communication is part of the social system. Systems theory

is not satisfied with the wholesale theorizing of human beings. It always demands further precision. To emphasize, this is not to deny human beings' importance for social communication. Rather, this is to assert that "none of these three realms can claim to include the other two," that "neither body nor mind nor society are the definite 'home' of the human being" (Moeller 2006, 10–1).

## 1.5. PHLEGRA: A SHOCKING RUPTURE

Systems should be described systemically, that is, to refer to Maturana and Varela again, through the prism of processes and relations which unfold between processes and which are realized through systems' components. This is probably the most controversial (because the most frequently misunderstood) part of Luhmann's SST. Unfortunately, it is based on misconstrued opinion that Luhmann dehumanizes society. Let us stop for a moment to consider this point in detail.

Well before Luhmann, when human being were first scientifically compared to machines, the idea turned out to be unpalatable for a part of scientific community, but Norbert Wiener did not mince his words when dealing with the knee-jerk-reaction-like rejection of the idea:

> It will not do to state categorically that the processes of reproduction in the machine and in the living have nothing in common. Pronouncements of this kind often seem to cautious and conservative minds to be less risky than rash statements of analogy. However, if it is dangerous to assert an analogy on insufficient evidence, it is equally dangerous to reject one without proof of its inconsequentialness. Intellectual honesty is not the same thing as the refusal to assume an intellectual risk and the refusal even to consider the new and emotionally disturbing has no particular ethical merit. (1964, 52)

When, later, Wiener's cybernetics and general systems theory were applied to social sciences, the reproaches of "technocratic bias and unwarranted reductionism" surfaced again (Geyer and van der Zouwen 1992, 96; Habermas and Luhmann 1975).

One of the next shocks experienced by the academia, clutching at old humanist tradition, was slicing the human being and the social experiences into a sort of systemic layers. Such slicing is evidenced in the theorizing of the social by Talcott Parsons, a leading post–World War II social systems American sociologist (Luhmann would become his student in the early 1960s):

> [A] social system is only one of the three aspects of the structuring of a completely concrete system of social action. The other two are the

> personality systems of the individual actors and the cultural system which is built into their action. Each of the three must be considered to be independent focus of the organization of the elements of the action system in the sense that no one of them is theoretically reducible to terms of one or a combination of the other two. Each is indispensable to the other two in the sense that without personalities and culture there would be no social system and so on around the roster of logical possibilities. But this interdependence and interpenetration is a very different matter from reducibility which would mean that the important properties and processes of one class of system could be theoretically *derived* from our theoretical knowledge of one or both of the other two. The action frame of reference is common to all three and this fact makes certain "transformations" between them possible. But on the level of theory here attempted they do not constitute a single system, however this might turn out to be on some other theoretical level. (1959, 6)

Luhmann builds on such approach and defines the autopoietic social system as composed of communication events and not of human beings. Following Talcott Parsons, Luhmann considers people from the viewpoint of social action—not of anthropology (2009, 31). Luhmann keeps apart psychology and sociology; the essence of the controversy concerning this point is a residue of the millennia-long humanist—anthropological—tradition centered on wholesale conceptualizations of human beings. It is important to understand, however, that human beings, for example translators and interpreters, if we move into the realm of translation, are not dispensed with; on the contrary, they constitute an important part of the environment of translation as a communication system. Luhmann clearly states that the human being is by no means seen as less important than before. He also adds that "anyone who thinks so (and such an understanding either explicitly or implicitly underlies all polemics against this proposal) has not understood the paradigm change in systems theory" (1995, 212). No communication, including translation, would be possible in the society without physical (living) and psychic systems (ibid., 210–5).

The sociological rupture is acerbated within TS because the former casts a shade on efforts to make the general public more conscious and appreciative of the translators' labor or sometimes even existence (cf. Venuti 2008). However, as there is a difference between animal rights movements and zoology, a line should also be drawn between social movements and science in sociology or in TS. SST studies society but does not claim to fight for a better social existence. TS focuses on translation but does not (or should not, in its academic capacity) fight for the translator's social status. There is nothing wrong either in scholarly endeavor to study society or translation

or in the human desire for dignity and respect, but these are very different activities and should not be confused.

As Maturana and Varela explain, the system cannot be understood from the reductionist viewpoint of the study of its components. Luhmann alluded in an interview that the efforts made within his SST were an attempt to overcome the crisis in sociology caused by sociologists' inability to understand the whole by studying its components. Sociological theory, according to him, cannot be made by adding billions of individual conscious systems or by resorting to a transcendental subject (more on Luhmann's combat against transcendentalism in sociology see Baier 1989). Luhmann saw hope for social theory in considering society a self-steering system and applying such systems-theoretical concepts as observation, distinctions, and circularity (Luhmann 2002, 176).

The system is an intrinsically relational phenomenon. Translation is a relational phenomenon *par excellence*. Translation is relational not only 'externally' (by helping to establish social relations) but also 'internally': translation brings together several components and organizes them systemically making these components parts of its own structure. Disregarding this fundamental feature of translation in its social existence leads to theoretical myopia where parts are overemphasized and the vision of the whole is lost or flickers. Translators' biographies lead to a better understanding of translation no more than describing properties of components leads to understanding of systemic organization of the whole. It is futile to try to grasp the mechanism of social involvements of translation in a certain place at a certain point in time by reducing the study of translation which is intrinsically a social phenomenon to portraits of translators and lists of translators' associations and unions or translated texts, leaving outside the scope of consideration the actual relations which make translation a social phenomenon, or more precisely a social system, manifested in a certain place at a certain point of history. This is not to say that other types of research are not to be done, but the means should not be mistaken for the ends and the auxiliary for the primary.

## 1.6. A SYSTEM, OR NOT A SYSTEM—THAT IS THE QUESTION . . .

> Even in times of narrowly prejudiced thought there was an inkling that life was not limited to organic corporeality.
>
> —Walter Benjamin

At this juncture, the following key question should be discussed at a greater detail: Is translation indeed a systemic phenomenon? What are the criteria of whether an entity should or should not be considered systemic and autopoietic?

### 1.6.1. In Search of an Ordometer

> We search in and around a subject for a concept, a pattern, that imposes order.
>
> —Edward O. Wilson

The present section aims to show that translation is a self-organizing system. In order to do that, it is important to understand that self-organizing system is such a system which, despite the second law of thermodynamics, increases its internal order. As Heinz von Foerster points out, in order to prove that a system is a self-organizing, there are two things which are to be shown (1981, 8). First, the system is to be proved to be a system. This requires defining what 'internal' means in application to the formation under investigation. Second, the order of such system should be shown to be increasing, not decreasing.

The first problem is the problem of drawing the systemic boundary. One encounters this problem whenever one deals with systems which do not come "wrapped in a skin" (Foerster 1981, 8). This puts the observer in the position to draw the boundary of what is to be called "inside" (ibid., 9; cf. Spencer Brown 1973; Luhmann 2000a, 102; Luhmann 2009, 15). In order to draw the boundary of a self-organizing system, one has to be able to show that a system is an enveloped region in which order increases. Since, as von Foerster wittily put it, there is no such gadget which would indicate if it is plugged into a self-*dis*organizing or self-organizing domain, thereby providing us with an unequivocal operational definition, another type of "ordometer" should be found (1981, 8–9). This ordometer is going to be not a gadget for plugging but a conceptual apparatus against which translation should be considered in terms of its systemic properties.

In his search of the conceptual basis for defining a system as self-organizing, von Foerster starts with Claude E. Shannon's definition of redundancy. Redundancy is defined by Shannon as the ratio of the actual entropy to the maximum entropy of the system. If the system is at its maximum entropy level, it means that the system is in the maximum disorder and the position of no element can be predicted from knowing the position of other elements. On the contrary, if the position of any one element can be determined based on the known positions of all other elements, the entropy, the disorder, or the degree of uncertainty, disappears, or, in mathematical terms, becomes zero. This system is, consequently, said to be in perfect order. In reality, the ratio of certainty vs. uncertainty is a matter of degrees between the maximum disorder and the maximum order. In self-organizing systems, however, the degree of order is higher than the degree of disorder and it is either increasing or maintained relatively high (at least higher than disorder).

We can hardly measure the degree of order vs. entropy of translation as a social phenomenon of the systemic nature numerically. Yet there is no doubt, that the history of translation over time is an evolution from a lower degree of organization to a higher degree. Moreover, this evolution is a development from a lower degree of self-organization to a higher degree of self-organization. In the sociology of professions, a field is considered to be a full-fledged, socially recognized profession when it possesses a body of knowledge governing its practice. This body of professionally specific knowledge is shared by a group of practitioners whose professionalism is sanctioned by specific educational establishments or official organizations granting the right to practice the profession. Professional behavior and performance are judged against a benchmark of the professional ethics. Eventually, practitioners begin to govern themselves with minimal external influence, they obtain public recognition and respect, and "the field becomes self-sustaining and self-perpetuating" (Paige and Martin 1996, 39).

If we look back at centuries and centuries of translation practice and theory, we can definitely see that it becomes more and more self-organized as a professional field. In systems-theoretical terms, this is a clear manifestation of translation being a self-organized system. Translation has evolved from a non-professional through a semi-professional activity to a socially recognized professional occupation. Translation is still practiced non-professionally, of course, yet the degree of quality expectation, social recognition, and the requirement of internal authorization by established professional organizations and experts makes it harder to practice translation in a non-professional way. This non- or semi-professionalism may be tolerated in non-official situations, but translation in courts, in governmental and political international structures, in multinational companies is more and more recognized as a profession that requires special education, experience, and ethics.

Translation theory is another stage in the evolution of translation which further proves the self-organizing property of translation qua system. Translation theory attempts to better understand translation as a phenomenon. Such growing understanding of various aspects of translation helps translation organize itself and combat universal entropy. Indeed, the translation system's entropy can be said to be less than the measure of redundancy: an element of the translation system is easily classifiable in relation to other elements. If a translation student is asked to assess a translated text or a translating process, s/he is likely to come up with an evaluation which will draw on other—previous and seen as analogous—translational phenomena (texts or procedures). The assessed translational phenomenon will be recognized as a translational phenomenon, thereby being related to other phenomena of the same or comparable nature. The translational phenomenon will be categorized as belonging to human-produced (oral/written) or machine-produced verbal translation. The translation phenomenon will further be characterized as a theme-, genre-, strategy-specific translation act, etc. Even a naïve

assessment of translation as good or bad will show that a phenomenon is placed within a system with a certain measure of redundancy (certainty). This measure of redundancy is larger than the measure of entropy because any translation event is classified as belonging to a body of comparable events which cluster together. If the communication event, which we recognize today as a translation event, were not recognized as a translation event but puzzled us as an event dissimilar to any other known and classifiable by us, then we could say that the redundancy of the translation system was smaller than the measure of its entropy. In other words, in that case, society would not see translation because what might be called translation would evaporate before it was made conceptually solid. This allows us to say that translation is a self-organizing system where the position of an element can be determined in relation to other elements.

Let us make a further step. Gail Fleischaker formulated the following three basic questions which are to be positively answered before one can regard an entity as autopoietic (cited in Luisi 1993, 21):

1. Is the system self-bounded?
2. Is the system self-generating?
3. Is the system self-perpetuating?

In TS, discussions whether translation should be viewed as a full-blown social systemic formation have so far been primarily conducted in terms of Bourdieusian theory of social fields. Since, despite all differences real or imagined, the term 'field' as defined in Bourdieusian sociology is comparable to and even interchangeable with Luhmannian '(sub)system' (Inghilleri 2005, 141; Casanova 2002, 8–9; Colliot-Thélène, François und Gebauer 2005, 62–3), one can *mutatis mutandis* reformulate the question as follows: Can translation be considered a social system, where 'social' implies 'autopoietic'? Let me briefly address the main objections raised in the literature.

- Sparseness of the translation mediation space as compared to other social systemic phenomena casts doubts on systemic properties of translation (summarized in Wolf 2007, 110). Yet the ephemerality of translation as a systemic formation is hardly a criterion of deciding whether translation could be analyzed as a system or not. In SST, all communication events are conceived of as fleeting phenomena, disappearing as soon as they appear. In fact, Luhmann is said to have radicalized the temporal aspect of autopoiesis (Seidl 2005, 9). This is not, however, an obstacle to theorizing these events as forming systems or subsystems. This is viewed as their nature which has little to do with their ability to be objects of study from the systemic point of view.
- Status and the degree of visibility of translation in present-day society are also brought up as a reason why translation cannot be viewed as

a systemic social phenomenon (see an overview in Wolf 2007, 114–7). However, neither the translators' submissiveness and their 'invisibility' in society, nor the social 'marginality' of the profession of translator or its underdeveloped institutionalization, nor the fact that translators' products are the result of interplay of various *habituses*, that they are incapable of forming their own 'space', always submitting to the commissioner's, source, or target cultural space—none of these reasons hold up as valid enough arguments. Translation can be considered as a systemic social phenomenon based on its intrinsic properties, which is mediation; its nature operationally distinguishes translation from all other social phenomena.

### 1.6.2. Self-Bounded

Translation's autopoiesis is ensured by the recursively reproduced nature of translation manifested in translational communication event (TCE). Note the difference between the notion of TCE suggested below and Andrew Chesterman's defining translation event temporally as "the duration of a translation task, from initial request to delivery and payment" (in Duarte, Rosa, and Seruya 2006, 13). Chesterman considers it in a short section on Luhmann, yet he does not seem to fully appreciate the central proposition of Luhmann's SST—to distinguish sociology, with its focus on communication systems, and psychology, with its focus on psychic systems. His suggestion to distinguish between translation events and translation acts, which "take place in the translator's head," (cf. Toury (1995, 249)), does not help much to make the definition of translation event adhere to Luhmann's SST. The problem seems to reside in Chesterman's understanding of communication. He is right that, for Luhmann, society is constituted of differentiated systems, such as law, religion, and politics, and their specific communication acts. He is also right that when searching for the element of the translation system, we should deal with the translation event understood as a communication act. But Luhmann defines communication acts not just as social activities "of a certain duration" (Chesterman), but as minimal units manifesting the nature of the communicative system to which they belong and which they autopoietically constitute with three selections (see below and in Glossary at the end of this book the entries *Communication (1)* and *Utterance*). These characteristics of communication event should serve as the basis for the concept of TCE.

TCE is a special case of communication events. Despite their staggering variety through different human communities and different historical periods, TCEs manifest intrinsic and invariable characteristics. Maturana and Varela would term such set of stable core characteristics *identity* (1980, 80 and passim). Emphatically, it is this fact—existence of translation as a specific type of communication—that makes translation a bounded system. From the viewpoint of this criterion, all communication events are either

translations or not. Translation may be theorized as an autopoietic system not because there are human beings who engage in translation or want to study those who engage in translation practice and what constitutes translation as translation; rather, there is an entity which has a definite operationally installed boundary, i.e., the boundary drawn by a specific type of self-steering and self-reproduction. This communication activity fulfils a specific function by virtue of being what it is, and it exists to fulfill this particular social function. Or, in terms of social functionality, the properties of translation allow it to be "differentiated according to a specific threshold problem" and to make a certain aspect of social existence, which is improbable, yet necessary, probable, and realizable (Luhmann 1986, 20–1; also Luhmann 2000a, 138). Translation increases the likelihood of intersystemic interaction and does it in its particular way. As far as human beings participating in TCE are concerned, they are a necessary environment and exercise the trigger-causality on the translation system, but not the effect-causality (see in Glossary the entry *Causality*).

As far as the self-organization of translation is concerned, the question is bound to arise: What is to be included into the theorizing of the translation system—only the translational act per se or the translational act plus the initial and final communications. In other words, since TCE brings together three parties A, B, and C, where A and C are source and target of communication exchange and B is a translating agent, what should be considered when the translation communication system is studied: only B or all three? Before discussing this question, the following clarifications are to be made. We should bear in mind that A, B, and C are not to be simplistically seen as individuals (which option is not excluded, however). Rather, they stand for complex, social-systemically contextualized communication components. In the process of communication, A and C become both source and target in turns. In the following discussion, for clarity's sake, I will limit myself only to one direction of communication: A → (B) → C.

TCE is composed of two communication events. Each of the two communication events consists of three parts (selections)—utterance, information, and understanding (Luhmann 1995, 139–44). The first communication event ($CE_1$) occurs between A and B (the source and translation): $CE_1$ [A: $Utterance_1 > Information_1 \cong$ B: $Understanding_1$]. It is semiotically and semantically complex in that it consists of ambivalent social-systemic communication elements. Their rich and ambivalent nature is quite well described in semiotics. During communication process, the initial ambivalence is reduced to what is perceived by the interacting parties as information. Information is the communicative core of utterance. The information of $CE_1$ contains what A wants to be understood. Yet rules of semiosis force A to add other features to this communicative core; A expects the other party to extract the communicative core from its semiotic package (utterance). That is why in the formula above, I showed that the initial utterance is 'larger' than the information contained in it. The final constituent of this communication is

B's understanding of the utterance. Inevitably, B's understanding is but an inference. Understanding is always conjectural and interpretative. This is why in the formula, the equivalence of A's information and B's understanding is shown as approximate, not equal to A's information.

The second communication event ($CE_2$) of TCE unfolds between B and C: $CE_2$ [B: $Utterance_2$ > $Information_2$ ≅ C: $Understanding_2$]. The above description of $CE_1$ is applicable *mutatis mutandis* to $CE_2$.

In reality, TCE is complex because what we theoretically sliced above into two separate formulae is spliced: TCE is [A: $Utterance_1$ > $Information_1$ ≅ B: ($Understanding_1$ = $Utterance_2$) > $Information_2$ ≅ C: $Understanding_2$].

Although TCEs are complex events with two distinguishable CEs, the first event ($CE_1$) is communication-wise 'defective'. Normally, CE strives to reach a goal—to establish or reinforce communication. Communication unfolds in the situation of double contingency, that is, the interacting parties are systems, closed to each other. The ego does not know how the alter intends to react to what is communicated. Nor does the alter know what is to be communicated by the ego. The first move is largely a blind move. The second move (reply) has the advantage of knowing the communicated first move, yet the knowledge is still very limited. Communication progresses from utter blindness to an ever better understanding of the alter by the ego and vice versa. The further down the road, the more the ego and alter's interaction acquires the properties of a system—operationally bounded by the interacting of the parties, that is, the communication becomes more distinct from everything else going on around. The communication develops its *eigen*-values, features characteristic only of it, and becomes operationally impenetrable for the environment. Yet $CE_1$, upon a closer inspection, turns out to be somewhat peculiar.

Despite the fact that the first understanding is reached, it is not acted upon. The translating agent (B) understands only in order to pass its understanding to the other end of the communication chain. The translating agent only mediates between communicating parties proper. Neither A nor C expect the full participation of B in the communication. However, the realization of dependency of the communication between A and C on B is there. The fuller translation manifests itself as a social subsystem over the course of social history, the fuller the system or interacting (sub)systems recognize translation as a factor to take into consideration. A and C are part of the environment as far as the translation process is concerned, and they exercise trigger-causality on it. Yet TCE cannot be generated without A and C and therefore the entire TCE should be included into the theorizing of the translation system. This is analogous to what Luhmann argues in his book on mass media. He writes that although in the system of mass media, no interaction can occur between sender and receivers because of the interposition of technology, reception should be included into the operation of communicating. In mass media, communication needs audience. The act of broadcasting, "in and of itself," is not enough for communication. Yet as

far as mass media are concerned (in contrast to interaction in face-to-face communication), it is difficult to pinpoint the target group, the latter being only assumed (Luhmann 2000b, 4).

As is the case with mass media, in translation, communication cannot be understood without including communication phenomena fed into it: B cannot be fully accounted for without A and C. Therefore, although translation does not communicate with parties A and C in the sense of acting upon the parties' utterances, it cannot be isolated from them. Hence, the entire TCE (A + B + C) should be viewed as a unit of theoretical (as well as practical) consideration. TCE's being a unit of consideration does not mean that the entire TCE should be seen as the element of translation (see Section 2.2.1). A and C are suppliers of communicative material which B (translation) handles in its particular way, different from any other communication system. Being indispensable for translation (B), A and C are in the relationship of structural coupling and, more precisely, interpenetration with B (see more in Section 2.6 and in Glossary: *Coupling*, *Interpenetration*, *Structural coupling*).

### 1.6.3. Self-Generating

Self-generation is the ability of the system to produce and reproduce its components thanks to the processes taking place within its boundary. Let us turn again to biology: a minimal autopoietic system has a boundary and content composed of at least one component, B. Another component (in biochemical terms, one metabolite) A enters the system from outside and triggers a process A → B within the system. The reaction between A and B produces another element B. This reaction is the system's self-generation, producing (at the expense of A) the element B necessary for the system's internal processes. Another type of reaction which may occur within the system is B → C. This is a process resulting from the system's internal operations but C either does not belong to the system and is, therefore, discharged from the system or is meant to be sent into the environment. Only B is kept within the system; neither A nor C, despite their close connection with B, is recognized or retained by the system. The operational processes producing elements are determined by the bounded system and take place only inside this system's boundary. The system produces its own elements as a result of its own operations (Luisi 1993, 24). The incoming component A manifests the interactional openness of the system, yet in no other bounded unit or anywhere else for that matter, can A be handled in the same fashion. This cannot fail to remind us of the way TCE was described in the previous section: party A's information was handled in a specific way, communication-wise deficient and intended for passing on, by party B. Party B, next, transforms (in its unique way) the communication of party A thereby making this communication communicable to party C. Again, no other bounded system can offer the same tackling of the communication

between A and C. As element B is found only within system B, the communication of the TCE type is generated only within the translation system. No other system can transform a communication event in the way translation does; or, quite simply, no other system can generate a TCE.

### 1.6.4. Self-Perpetuating

As in biochemistry, there are different kinds of systemic dynamics (or kinetics, to use another physical-biochemical term). The system produces its elements, thus regenerating itself, and phenomena C, which are results of its internal operations and which are discharged, at a certain rate. (1) If the rate of A → B is equal to B → C, then the system is said to be self-perpetuating; (2) if A → B > B → C, the system is said to be self-replicating; (3) if A → B < B → C, the system becomes impoverished in component B and thus is in the state of implosion (Luisi 1993, 24–5).

Applied to the translation system, these three rates correspond to three types of situations when the production of TCEs is either (1) in the state of homeostasis (i.e., the quantity of translations is stable) or (2) is on the rise (translational activity is increasing), or (3) translations are decreasing. These three rates may also be interpreted in terms of modes of production of TCEs: (1) there are TCEs produced only in this or that predominant mode; (2) there are TCEs with increasing and more varied types of translation production; (3) TCEs' production modes are becoming less varied. Examples may be found in different types of societies. Type (1) may be illustrated by the predominance of either oral TCEs (for instance, in/between societies at earlier stages of development with little or no writing). Type (2) may be found in societies adding CEs in writing to orally transmitted CEs mediated by, respectively, written and oral TCEs. At some further stages (in modern world) CEs start being mediated through machine-produced TCEs. Finally, situation (3) is observed when certain thematic or genre types of CEs decrease; and therefore the number of translations of such CEs also drops.

Thus, based on this kinetic scheme of various types, we can conclude "that once the system is self-bounded and self-generating, it must be autopoietic, in one of the three dynamic expressions of autopoiesis, namely, self-replication, self-perpetuation, or self-implosion" (Luisi 1993, 26). Therefore, translation can be viewed as a system. This conclusion is also borne out by the sociological theory of professions (see Section 1.6.1). As a professional domain, translation has its distinctive body of knowledge, its educational institutions, professional ethics. Over time, the profession practices its craft "without excessive external intervention. The field becomes self-sustaining and self-perpetuating" (Paige and Martin 1996, 39). Such dynamics may well be used to legitimize translation's claim to be a professional domain. It is this vector of the development of translation qua self-organizing system that allows such claims of translator's visibility as what is practiced by the

feminist translation affording to "hijack" the original (Flotow 1991; 1997) as well as what is theorized concerning the social status of the translator as an expert in intercultural communication in the theories *Skopos* and *Translatorisches Handeln* (Reiss and Vermeer 1984, 149; Holz-Mänttäri 1984, 82).

### 1.6.5. Allopoietic or Autopoietic?

If we agree that translation can be described as a system, the question of what kind of system it is—allo- or autopoietic—still needs to be elaborated on. Allopoietic systems are systems that rely on (re)generating inputs from outside sources for their functioning. Autopoietic systems function out of themselves (although they draw matter, energy, and information from outside). Computer programs or assemblage lines are designed to perform certain functions and cannot reproduce themselves. Living cells perform certain functions, too, but they also reproduce themselves.

Translation is an autopoietic system because translational operations reproduce themselves drawing on prior translational operations and anticipating future translational operations. Like any communication element, the translation system's elements are short-lived (if not preserved in a more durable medium—in writing or in print). As communication elements interconnect to form the communication system, the translation system's elements interconnect to form their system. Like any communication system, the translation system "is of course not a space which disappears without leaving a trace," as Michaela Wolf rightly concludes (2007, 117). On the contrary, the translation system is a "mediation space" with "numerous continuities or tradition lines," which "is built up through new connections" (ibid., 118). "Mediation space" is not, however, to be understood as a third space between two communicating parties because although from the viewpoint of its function, translation can be described as a system, in practicality, in the social context, translation is always a subsystem of an overall communication system. Autopoietic observations function by indicating one side of a distinction, such as translation vs. non-translation, and thereby the distinguished indication is motivated by further recursive interconnections, based on prior observations, forming memory, and on anticipating what can be done with the distinction (Luhmann 2000a, 59).

One may question the translation system's autopoiesis because, apparently, translation exists as long as other communication events are fed into it. Indeed, does not this, perhaps, mean that translation as a system is allopoietic? The answer is an emphatic 'no'. Taking inputs in the form of energy and information from the environment does not turn autopoiesis into allopoiesis. Autopoietic systems have their own operational closure; incoming energy and information play the role of trigger-causality and not effect-causality. In other words, despite the fact that there is an input from outside (the mediated component of the translational communication

event), translation keeps its operational closure intact. The mediated part only triggers a translation event but does not define its nature. At the same time, as there is no system without environment, there is no translation with only the mediating component; even if the mediated component does not exist, it is still implied/referred to, albeit in reality the reference may be tantamount to 'zero'. Pseudo-translations present a classical example of TCEs with an implied but not really existing mediated component.

# 2 Properties of Translation Qua System

> The decisive question is whether, and in what ways, other autopoietic systems, endowed with their own autonomy and their own operative [operational[1]—*S.T.*] closure, can emerge within the autopoietic system of society.
>
> —Niklas Luhmann

## 2.1. THE STATE OF THE ART

This section focuses on TS literature where Luhmann's SST is considered in application to the study of translation. This is only one of many aspects of "the interface of disciplines" at which translation studies finds itself (Duarte, Rosa, and Seruya 2006). A good, if brief, overview of sociological approaches is found in Andrew Chesterman's paper in Duarte, Rosa, and Seruya (2006, 12–8). Chesterman finds sociological aspects in polysystem theory, in translation (and interpreting) historiography, in critical discourse theory and in applications of pragmatic frameworks, in skopos theory, in studies discussing problems of translation quality control, the translation market and language planning issues, etc. Certainly Chesterman's list is not exhaustive. More then ten years after, one could add intersections of the study of translation with sociology of translation of mass media (Gambier and Gottlieb 2001); studies exploring translation in relation to globalization (Cronin 2003; Bielsa 2005; Bielsa and Hughes 2009), or with postcolonial theories (Bhabha 1994; Robinson 1997; Bassnett and Trivedi 1999; Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 1999, especially pp. 283–318; Basalamah 2009), or with gender issues and, more specifically, with feminism (Flotow 1991; 1997; Simon 1996), or with narrative strategies (Baker 2006); etc.

Luhmannian approaches to translation form an integral part of a flock of cultural-cum-sociological trends (Chesterman mentions Luhmann together with Bourdieu, Latour, and Callon as part of sociological influences—Duarte, Rosa, and Seruya 2006, 12–21). The context, in which translation operates, keeps being broadened all along since its emancipation from applied linguistics and literary criticism. Eugene Nida, one of the pioneers of considering TS as "a science" (1964), always stressed the importance of socio-cultural contexts in the study of translation (2001). The polysystem theoretical paradigm also considered translation in a wider context (Even-Zohar 1979; 1990). The 1990s were marked by broadening the study of translation to include the cultural context (Bassnett and Lefevere 1996). The edited collection of papers presented in the Second International Congress of the European Society for Translation Studies (in Granada in 1998)

was named "Translation in Context" (Chesterman, Gallardo San Salvador, and Gambier 2000), and this context is understood as including situational, sociological, and political factors; psychological (cognitive) aspects; social and cultural effects of translation; culture-bound concepts; etc. As Andrew Chesterman pointed out elsewhere, the research, usually categorized as informed by cultural studies, is, in fact, closer to sociology. The compound *sociocultural* is used, yet Chesterman believes at least a rough line should be drawn to separate sociological and cultural issues. When it came to the actual 'operation' upon the notion *sociocultural*, Chesterman decided to cut it into three big pieces taking into consideration distinguishably different contexts (in Duarte, Rosa, and Seruya 2006, 11):

- *Cultural* with the focus on values, traditions, ideas and ideologies;
- *Sociological* concentrating on people, primarily on translators, their observable group behavior, the institutions in which they work, etc.;
- *Cognitive* dealing with translation-related mental processes, decision-making, etc.

Incidentally, in separating the sociological context from the cognitive one, Chesterman, in fact, agrees with Luhmann's separation of sociology and psychology, yet for Luhmann society is comprised not of people (because for him it is too vague and crude as a notion), but of communications. In his translational-sociological research Chesterman focuses on the actor-network theory elaborated by Bruno Latour and Michel Callon (ibid., 21–3).

In what follows, I will not consider the evolution of contextualizing translation (although it is a fascinating subject for the TS historian) any further; nor will I discuss the division between "socio-" and "cultural" or subdivisions of "the sociology of translation," the lines of research suggested by Chesterman (ibid., 12). Rather, I will focus on those publications which deal directly with Luhmann's SST as applied to TS. I will return to Chesterman's map of the sociology of translation in Conclusion.

Publications directly dealing with possible ways of applying Luhmann's SST to translation are not numerous. Even fewer of them were of any considerable volume. The first attempt to consider translation as a system was made by Andreas Poltermann (1992).

Poltermann built on the application of SST to the theory of literature by such scholars as Siegfried J. Schmidt and Dietrich Schwanitz. Poltermann's attempt sounded out possibilities of discovering new theoretical models for studying cultural and literary history and, more specifically, the history of literary translation (1992, 5–6). Poltermann theorized literary translation as part of the literary subsystem, thus following the paradigm which had already been suggested in DTS and, with the help of SST, considering dynamics of literary translation in relation to the target culture and society. He clearly states that the evolution of translation cannot be adequately explained only based on literary aesthetics, but should be considered

against a wider background of the development of the system/environment difference between the literary system and other social systems (ibid., 8–11, 24). Yet in his article, Poltermann considers exclusively literary translation. Within TS, the vector of Luhmann's SST has only slowly been moving away from this cradle of all translation theory.

Theo Hermans's works on the application of Luhmann are the most important next step following up Poltermann's first endeavor and, by far, constitute the most productive contribution to this line of research in TS. Although not fully devoid of misunderstandings and despite the fact that he does not venture into details of Luhmann's SST, Hermans's works have been indeed stimulating and thought provoking. Hermans considered the applicability of Luhmann's theory to translation in several publications showing a development of his ideas (1997; 1999; 2007a; 2007b). Yet his overall vision did not change in that Hermans views translation as a function system among other social function systems (2007b, 66; 2007a, 115, 117). Society, in accordance with Luhmann's vision, is presented as having "no centre and no overarching rationale or narrative" (2007a, 118). Each system's unity as well as its own sense of being distinct derives from its social function, that role which the system allocates to it (2007b, 66). However, Hermans hardly takes into consideration the place assigned to translation in the overall social system. That is, by the way, why he sees no need to distinguish between the notions *system* and *subsystem*, the difference which is constitutive for the application of SST to translation in the present study.

The principal questions posed by Hermans are: What constitutes translation as a specific activity? How can we account for its heteronomy? (1999, 137) This is where Hermans sees the applicability of Luhmann's theory: it enables us if not to answer these questions, at least it sheds further light on some of the aspects of these problems.

Hermans seems not to be fully sure if translation is a system. That is why he is careful to separate ontology and epistemology. He does not claim to demonstrate that translation *is* a system (or that it *is not*, for that matter). Rather, he applies Luhmann's SST to deploy a new conceptual apparatus (2007a, 111; 2007b, 66). To emphasize, whatever the relationship of ontology and epistemology in Hermans's theory is, no doubt his is a very stimulating, groundbreaking and constructive way of considering the potential of Luhmann's SST for translation studies.

Hermans applies Luhmann's criteria of social systems to translation and justly concludes that translation may be described as a social autopoietic system because it has its particular social function, its code with programs regulating its autopoietic communication (norms, expectations), its medium (Hermans 2007b, 66–7; 1999, 143). Such view of translation as a system in its own right informs Part I of the present study, and I will return to details of Hermans's application of SST repeatedly in what follows.

Andrew Chesterman considered Luhmann's SST in his paper "Questions in the Sociology of Translation" (in Duarte, Rosa, and Seruya 2006, 9–27).

In his survey of sociological theories applicable to TS, he devoted a brief section to SST. Chesterman cites Hermans (1999) and Poltermann (1992) and tries to combine Theo Hermans's Luhmann-inspired ideas with Gideon Toury's descriptive TS. However, Chesterman's interpreting of Luhmann's theory is not fully devoid of misunderstandings. I have commented already on his definition of translation event (Section 1.6). Chesterman refers to the difference between translation acts and translation events, but it is not clarified, to which notion in SST the notion *translation act* might correspond. Or is it meant to be the introduction of a new concept only inspired by SST but having no counterpart there? In any case, one should stop here and recall that in Luhmann's SST, something like translation acts, which are "acts [that] take place in the translator's head, at the level of cognition" (in Duarte, Rosa, and Seruya 2006, 13), would not be considered at all and will be relegated to psychology.

Chesterman mentions Hermans's suggestion to consider valid vs. non-valid representation of the source text as translation's binary code, but it is only natural that in a brief survey no conceptual analysis of the notion is provided. Chesterman touches upon self-reflective and self-developing properties of translation qua system ensured by discourse on translation in addition to translation events proper. Perceptions of translation are found both in the discourse on translation and in translators' own statements. They serve as expectations influencing translators' vision and practice. This provides a possibility to conceptualize norms as expectations within the translation system. Luhmann also is believed to offer a way of studying how translation as a system relates to other social systems in terms of its interference and influence.

This cursory look at the potential Luhmann's SST may have in store for TS does not claim to serve as anything more than a reference in a larger overview. It is definitely influenced by Theo Hermans's application of SST which is clear from the fact that Chesterman also writes about translation only as a system among other social systems and does not consider translation as a subsystem of the overall social system.

Hans J. Vermeer put out two book-size publications with Luhmann's SST figuring as a major theory underlying Vermeer's own translation-theoretical ideas. Regrettably, it has to be admitted that both of these publications seem to be examples of misapplication rather than application of Luhmann's SST to translation studies. Vermeer sees the applicability of Luhmann's theory only for demonstrating "the indefinite complexity of translation," and based on this he uses SST within his skopos-theory agenda: he intends to show "the translator's freedom and responsibility" (2006a, 9; cf. 2006b, 21–5, 373–6).

Reading the first of Vermeer's books, *Luhmann's "Social Systems" Theory: Preliminary Fragments for a Theory of Translation* (2006a), one cannot help having the impression that the book appeared in print rather prematurely and the "fragments" seem to be too "preliminary." Indeed,

they are, in the author's own words, "in no way complete, but a kind of 'bricolage'" (p. 8). It seems that the author read too many passages in Luhmann's *Social Systems* only "staccato" (p. 9).

Vermeer also seems to take on himself too many tasks for one "essay" (p. 5). Reading Luhmann (hence, following Luhmann 1995 in structure) and trying to apply SST to translation, Vermeer introduces his own terminology, thereby creating confusion, despite his hope to the contrary (p. 7). All this is done, however, in order to pave a way for a fuller interpretation of Luhmann's SST in its application to translation which was to follow (2006b, 12, footnote 8). Vermeer 2006a is rather a collection of marginal notes made while reading a book. For example, stating that the terms *system*, *society*, "etc." (the reader is invited to continue the list) are only theoretical and not ontological, Vermeer continues: "But even theoretical objects exist (potentially/virtually) on a special level of the "real world" (cf. below)" (2006a, 5). This kind of vague references to something 'above' or 'below' crop up rather too profusely and only add to confusion: the references are never definite, and more often than not the reader is left with no explanations here and now, but is sent for them somewhere 'below' or somewhere 'above'.

In some passages, we see the author's own puzzlement and are left to do our own guesswork. For example: "Elements, whether simple or complex, behave (move, act [?]) relative to their assumed function (skopos) in a situation for something/someone" (2006a, 26). One would expect from the author of a monograph not just to hint at but take some time and space and decipher his/her ideas, recollections, let alone suddenly popping up associations, such as the author's association between Luhmann's concepts of self-observation and self-reference and a book "on a possible pre-historic structure of Basque" (2006a, 125; cf. also 2006a, 24). To preclude any misunderstanding, I would like to emphasize that I do not deny that Vermeer 2006a contains interesting ideas. What I want to say is that Vermeer's ideas in this publication are too haphazard and seem to make one's effort to appreciate his insights too time- and effort-consuming. At times, the book seems to be intended for only one reader—the author himself. One needed to wait for him to transcribe his shorthand.

The transcription appeared in the same year in German, entitled *Versuch einer Intertheorie der Translation* (2006b). Unfortunately, although the presentation became considerably better structured, Vermeer 2006b confirmed the worst fears about the way its author (mis)understood or (mis)interpreted Luhmann. Sometimes, it is difficult to distinguish between misunderstandings and misinterpretations because Vermeer does not always clearly separate his retelling and interpreting Luhmann's theory from changing it, "going beyond it" (2006a, 6), modifying it to suit the agenda of his interdisciplinary interaction theory (2006b, 7). In what follows I will provide a few examples from both Vermeer's books.

Vermeer seems to have misunderstood/misinterpreted/modified such key concept of SST as self-observation. In the opening lines of a chapter on self-

reference and rationality (2006a, 125), he considers Luhmann's concept *(self-)observation* but trivializes it beyond recognition, for example, when he reduces observation to a person's looking in the mirror in the morning and recognizing him/herself as the person s/he saw the evening before. Such superficial example is rather a caricature of Luhmann's highly formalized theory of observation (Luhmann 2002, 174). According to Luhmann, self-referential systems differentiate by self-reference in that the systems refer to themselves "in constituting their elements and their elemental operations." This is how the systems create "a description of themselves" or at least differentiate between themselves and their environments (1995, 9). Self-referential observation, thus, is a process which constitutes elements and elemental operations of the system. This is carried out by distinguishing the system's elements from the environment. In this sense, "on the level of general systems theory, observation means nothing more than handling distinctions" (Luhmann 1995, 36; cf. also p. 73 and passim).

According to Vermeer, "observations are processed in an organism's neuro-physical apparatus" (2006a, 14). Vermeer's interpretation is only common-sensically biological. According to Luhmann, only in psychic systems, the concept of self-observation presupposes consciousness, whereas other systems, such as social systems—and I would add: including translation—have their own particular modes of observation (1995, 36). For example, a cell and an immune system (self-)observe because they make distinctions, and a social system, which has no consciousness either, (self-)observes by making distinctions (Luhmann 2002, 174–6; Luhmann 1995, 34, cf. 210–54).

Vermeer's confusing three clearly distinguished realms—living, psychic, and social systems—is betrayed in another passage, when Vermeer describes Luhmann himself as an observer. He does that in the following terms: "as a human being, Luhmann is a system according to his theory" (2006a, 15, footnote 21). Yet according to Luhmann's systems theory, Luhmann himself should be presented as a combination of three systems: his body would constitute a biological system; his mind a psychic system; and his communications would belong to the realm of the social (cf. Moeller 2005, 18–9). That is why when Luhmann uses terms like 'Lebewesen' (living being), he immediately provides a clarification of the following type: "[E]ine »Übertragung« von Information von einem Lebewesen auf ein anderes (bzw. von einem Bewußtseinssystem auf ein anderes) unmöglich ist" (Luhmann 1997, 194; "A "transfer" of information from one living being to another (i.e., from one consciousness system to another) is impossible"—my translation).

It is little surprise that eventually Vermeer doubts that Luhmann's systemic approach is applicable to TS because then he pities a "poor translator" ("den armen Translator"), torn apart by impossible interactions between two social systems interacting through him/her (2006b, 370). In contrast to Luhmann's concept of social systems, Vermeer presents his own view of a "general" translation system, which is a special type of "social system comprehending a translator (including an interpreter)," their acting (e.g., oral interpretation, written translation), results of their work (translations), as

well as other participants of the translation process (e.g., recipients, commissioners, source-text authors and senders) (2006a, 5–6). At the same time, "the translator with her/his acting (translating), the recipients, etc. etc." are said to be "a set of (interdependent) systems in the environment of the overall translation system" (ibid., 6). Vermeer's ideas, no doubt, have their merit and value, yet not as an attempt to apply SST to translation. If translation is to be understood as a social system or a communicative system in the Luhmannian sense of the terms, then people (translators, interpreters, recipients, etc.) cannot be "comprehended" by such system. The reason is simple (although, it should be granted, counter-intuitive): a social (communicative or, in other English renderings, communication) system is composed of communications (communicative events) and is informed by an action theory rather than by traditional anthropological views. That is why to state that translation qua social/communicative system "comprehends" people is to contradict the immediately following claim that all people comprehended by translation qua social system form a set of systems in the environment of the overall translation system (provided we define social system as Luhmann does).

Some passages in Vermeer's books (especially in 2006a) are extremely confusing, if not illogical. For example, Vermeer refers to Luhmann's attribution of self-reference to social systems. Then he throws in the anti-thesis that not all systems are self-referential. The next sentence repeats Luhmann's idea that self-reference should not be limited to conscious systems. Vermeer gives the following reason: "otherwise one could not call social systems self-referential" (2006a, 126). In fact, Luhmann proceeds in the opposite direction: he finds a common feature of all self-referentiality and, based on that, expands it to non-conscious systems, including social systems. Vermeer's presentation of allegedly Luhmann's reasoning seems to be that, firstly, social systems are self-referential, yet secondly, not all systems are self-referential (who claimed that all systems were self-referential?), and, thirdly, self-reference should not be limited to conscious systems. Vermeer concludes with his own commentary that "following the above reasoning, one can say that translations are not self-referential systems, but translators are" (ibid.). One cannot help wondering why Vermeer drew such a conclusion. Should it not be the opposite: not all systems are self-referential, but social systems are self-referential because self-reference should not be limited only to conscious systems? Translation does not possess consciousness (in contrast with translators), yet it still may be said to be self-referential, if we follow the reasoning presented by Vermeer. At such junctures of Vermeer's application of SST, one wonders if what he intends to say is adequately expressed.

This passage begs yet another question. In the beginning of his book (2006a), Vermeer defines translation as "a comprehensive social system" which comprehends the translator (p. 5). In the passage referred to in the previous paragraph, a hundred pages after, the picture seems to be the opposite: translators work on "their own subsystems (the translations, source- and target-texts etc.)." Translators—and not translation—are presented as self-referential systems with their own subsystems. No explanation as to how

the metamorphosis happened is provided. Yet despite its demotion from comprehending the translator to being comprehended by him/her, according to the next paragraph, translation is again proclaimed to be a social system, based on an abstract understanding of reference as the operation of observation distinguishing "something" from "something else" (ibid.). In his jotted, as it seems, notes, Vermeer does not stop to link his ideas, contradicting each other; nor does he specify which ones of them may be just conjectures "along the way" and which are his final statements.

To be sure, this type of confusions and riddles cannot fail to beget further confusions. According to Luhmann, social systems have their exclusive communication which (operationally) closes them, unless it is specified that intersystemic or system/environment interaction is discussed which implies interactional openess of social systems. Vermeer declares that since systems depend on their environment, they are not closed but semi-closed and that "communication as a process, when properly accepted (adapted, assimilated), 'opens' a system" (2006a, 20). This begs the question: What is closed and what is open in these semi-closed systems? Perhaps they are closed exactly in what Luhmann terms as operational closure and open exactly in what Luhmann terms interactional openness? Then, why reinvent the wheel and give a vaguer term where Luhmann's theory is more specific? Luhmann's precise terminology would have saved Vermeer a contradictory statement that "no system can constitute itself" (2006a, 21). The reader is again stranded with his/her questions such as: How can such a system be (called) autopoietic at all? Or, are we talking about autopoietic systems' drawing on matter, information, and energy supplies from the environment? Or, are we talking about autopoietic systems at all?

Vermeer, possibly hinting at Luhmann's famous dictum that only communication can communicate, states: "No translation can translate itself" (2006a, 21). This is to be understood in the same context, as the above-discussed statement:

> Whatever comes in/is taken in from the outside must be assimilated to the system [ . . . ]. There is no direct take-over. No system can constitute itself. No translation can translate itself. There are three types of constitution: the assimilation of what is taken from the environment (cf. a terminology list from the Internet), the preparation of a terminology list before a translation is started, or gradual preparation of a list, whilst texts are translated. (Ibid., 21)

Once again, some untangling is to be done, if we are to understand this within Luhmann's SST. If by "assimilation" as opposed to "direct take-over" Vermeer means the procedures similar to the process when a system is irritated by its environment and, if it decides to positively response to this irritation, the system accepts the 'trigger-effect' and processes it according to its own operational principles—if this is what Vermeer means, than we should agree with him that there is "no direct take-over." Yet to conclude from

this, without further specifications, that "no system can constitute itself" is going too far. It is too far terminologically and therefore conceptually: self-constituting is a key concept in the communication systems theory, such as SST. Self-constituting occurs by effect-causality, not by trigger-causality. Judging from the context, Vermeer writes about trigger-causality, hence, he should have chosen another term in order to avoid confusion. The confusion does not clear up but is made even worse in the next phrase which I have quoted at the beginning of this paragraph that no translation can translate itself. Apparently, according to Vermeer, translation cannot translate in the sense that it itself cannot download a terminology list from the Internet and thereby constitute itself in the first sense of the term *consitution*. Translation cannot translate itself because before it is started it cannot constitute itself in the second sense—by compiling a terminology list and typing the list into the computer (obviously translation is not started yet and, on top of it, translation has no eyes, brain, fingers). Finally, translation cannot translate itself in the third sense, because whilst unfolding, it must be too busy to gradually prepare "a list" (of what? terms?). Obviously, Vermeer does not understand (or misinterprets) the concept of autopoiesis as an operationally closed but interactionally open process. Translation *can* translate, and only translation can translate. I take out the ambiguous *itself*, because, clearly, Vermeer does not mean translation's translating itself in the sense of translation's second-order observations (see Chapter 3 of the present study). Only communication can operate as communication and, therefore, only communication can communicate (with whatever elements introduced into it from its environment by trigger-causality). By the same token, only translation can operate as translation and, hence, only translation can translate.

Luhmann clearly distinguishes between sociology and psychology (2002, 155–6), yet undertaking his application of SST, Vermeer does not seem to appreciate the significance of Luhmann's paradigm change. Therefore, the last word in formulating Vermeer's Intertheory is secured for psychology. Why not? Does Vermeer not have the right to do that? Certainly, he does. But one wonders, why he claims to consider "Luhmann's social systems theory in its application to translation" (2006a, 5)? Vermeer grants psychology the last and decisive word. Luhmann's sociology allegedly postulates the translator (note the wholesale term once again) as a closed system incapable of appropriating either the author or his/her text(s) (2006b, 373). Yet Vermeer's agenda is skopos-theoretical freedom of the translator and his/her explicit expert professional responsibility (ibid.). Yet once again, Vermeer's theorizing misfires. The translator is not just one system, but three, and we have just discussed that. Also, although autopoietic systems are closed, they are closed, according to Luhmann's SST, operationally, but they are open interactionally. Vermeer is absolutely correct that, according to Luhmann, the translator cannot appropriate the author (in all of his/her respective tripartite systemics), yet communication can well be established between them in the social realm. If they belong to different social systems, then communication of one of the operationally closed but interactionally open systems will

interact with the other operationally closed but interactionally open system and produce an irritation of the other, yet it is up to the other system how to process this irritation, which processing will be carried out in terms of and according to the other system's own internal operational closure. It is exactly in order to save a poor translator or any other complex being from being torn or cut apart that Luhmann suggested to study separately bodies in biology, minds or 'black boxes' in psychology, and communication in sociology. Vermeer's fundamental misunderstanding of Luhmann's SST seems to be in his failure to see that SST is action-based and that helps account for unconscious and unintended effects of translation in society, rather than to provide stimulus to the translator's struggle for his/her social status. That is why the merits of these two books should be looked for in their other qualities (not in their "application" of Luhmann's SST to translation), which are, no doubt, worth considering, but this goes beyond the scope of my present effort.

## 2.2. LEVELS OF DESCRIPTION

To understand functioning of social systems and their sub- and subsubsystems, it is helpful first to consider certain important details of the concept of observation. As we have seen in the previous section, due to its counter-intuitive logic in SST, the concept of observation may be misunderstood, and then, instead of clarifying, will only muddle our vision, and instead of appreciating the reinforcing strength of SST for the theory of translation, we will unjustly suspect it of only undermining the attempts to better understand the phenomenon of translation.

Observing implies marking, that is distinguishing one thing from another and indicating one and not the other, for example differentiating between what belongs to the observing agent and what is alien to it. Based on this distinction, some observed phenomena gain the status of 'marked' (intrinsic) as opposed to others—'unmarked' (extrinsic, foreign). This is shown in Figure 2.1.

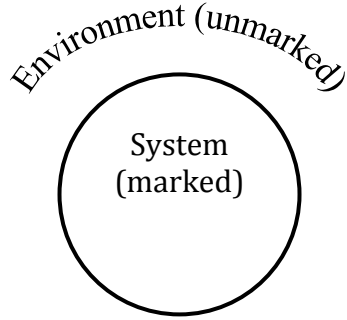



*Figure 2.1.* The marking/unmarking observation.

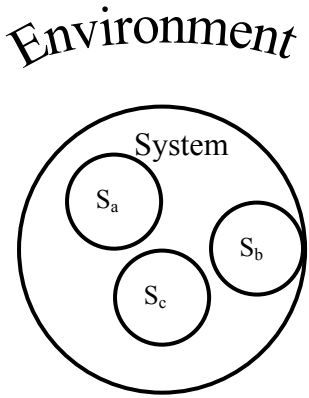



*Figure 2.2.* The levels of description.
*Legend:* $S_{a, b, c}$ are subsystems if viewed on the System/Environment scale and systems to each other.

Applied to the autopoietic system, some of the phenomena observed by such system are considered to be part and parcel of its internal communication, whereas all the others, part of the system's environment. In other words, some (marked) phenomena are 'inside' the system and *are* the system; the others (unmarked) are 'outside' the system and are the environment. The system observes constantly by distinguishing between itself as the marked domain and the unmarked environment. That is why autopoietic systems are observing systems.

The system also re-enters the division of phenomena as marked and unmarked into itself. As a result its marked homogeneity is heterogenized. Over the course of history, social systems were heterogenized differently depending on the criteria applied to their marked 'inside'. Hence, we see the segmentation of the society into identical (tribe-like) formations; the rank-based stratification (classes, castes); the territorial differentiation into center and periphery (the capital and provinces with respective political, economical, and cultural statuses); and finally, the formation of functionally differentiated subsystems (the economy, law, religion, art, etc.). All these difference schemata define different ways of how the system is divided into subsystems. Intrasystemically, one marked space is juxtaposed with other marked spaces. On the scale of the entire social system, these systemic internal marked spaces are subsystems and their mutual relations are described as 'subsystem vs. subsystem'; for each other, these subsystems are systems and, therefore, their relations are on the scale 'system vs. system' (Figure 2.2).

In his *Art as a Social System* (2000a), Luhmann illustrated the difference between the relations of subsystems with their overall system, on the one scale of description, and subsystems as systems to each other, on the other, as follows:

> When dealing with system/environment relations, the system constitutes the internal [marked—*S.T.*] side of the form, whereas the environment is its unmarked space. "The environment" is nothing else but an empty correlate of the system's self-reference; it provides no information. If, however, we are dealing with system/system relations [within a social system at large—*S.T.*], then the other side can be marked and indicated. In this case [on the intrasystemic scale—*S.T.*], art no longer deals with 'everything else' but with questions such as whether and to what extent the artist is motivated by political convenience or by wealthy customers. (2000a, 135)

Thus, we see two levels of observation: 'system vs. environment' and 'system vs. system'. In the latter case, (sub)systems form environment for each other, but this environment is marked and indicated, that is, it does provide information unlike the environment in the system/environment relations. Additionally, another level of observation—'system vs. subsystem'—is also to be considered if translation is to be studied in its societal involvements (see Table 2.1).

When we apply these different types of systemic relations to translation, we can see the following possibilities. Translation can be viewed as a subsystem within a system. To qualify translation as such a phenomenon, one has to describe the place it occupies in the overall social system and address the problem of its being 'diffused' among other subsystems, one of the reasons why translation is denied the status of a system.

When translation is studied as a subsystem but in relation to other subsystems, the problem, if the translation subsystem is of equal status in the society with the economy, law, art, etc. or if it is somehow subordinate to these function subsystems of the modern society, should be addressed. This is the scale of the observation 'system vs. system'.

Another question would be rather of a historical/diachronic nature: What was the place of translation before the modern function-based social systems took their present-day shape? For example, what the social systemic status of translation was in the society of segmentary differentiation? To characterize the social role of translation within non-function-based societies would require theory of these societies. Luhmann's theory, however, is focused on modern society. For this reason, the role of translation in other types of societies is not discussed in the present study.

*Table 2.1* Levels of Systemic Description

| |
|---|
| System vs. Environment |
| System vs. System |
| System vs. Subsystem |
| Subsystem vs. Subsystem (≈ System vs. System) |

Finally, translation may be described as an autopoietic system opposed to all other, both autopoietic and allopoietic, systems without privileging its social characteristics. In this case, translation may be juxtaposed with any other type of autopoietic systems: for example, with legal or military operational closures, with biological or psychic autopoieses, etc. Translation may also be compared with allopoietic systems, provided such a procedure is found worth an effort. This scale of observation is 'system vs. environment'.

### 2.2.1. System/Environment

In the following sections, I will consider translation from these different angles, and I will start with the last outlined above because it is logical to start at the most fundamental level.

Translation may seem to be too 'diffused' in the society to form a distinct entity of the systemic status. This raises doubts if translation can at all be viewed as a systemic phenomenon. Obviously, it is not enough to say that translational acts as long as they can be referred to as 'translational' acts must belong to a 'system' of acts having something that makes them 'translational', because saying this would simply categorize translation, but not make it a system, an assemblage of interrelated and interacting units, let alone an autopoietic (observing and operationally closed) system.

First of all, it should be taken into consideration that translation is not just a diffused social phenomenon. In fact, all social texture is discrete. Communication events appear and disappear; social units and functions are not always continuous over space and time, either. In sociology, Talcott Parsons referred to this property of the social as "latent pattern maintenance." Luhmann explains Parsons's term as follows: thanks to this property, social functions are maintained even when they are not in use. Banking systems or religious structures are always there even when we do not use them (Luhmann 2009, 24). Translation's diffuseness, thus, is no exception in society capable of maintaining patterns regardless of whether they function constantly, most of the time or only from time to time, everywhere or only in some loci. One could also think of the human body as an example. We do not eat all the time, yet when we eat, the digesting system is always there; we do not use all the muscles all the time, yet when we need a certain group of them, they are ready to operate. Culture in society is another clear example of such diffuse functioning: we do not come to weddings all the time, yet when we are invited, our culture prompts us how to behave despite the fact that the previous time we may have been in a similar social setting could be a while ago. The same is true about social functions, including translation. Functionality is exercised in society based on the nature of the functioning phenomenon, not on the latter's compactness in space and continuity in time.

We have seen that translation observes its distinction as an activity having its properties. These properties set translation apart from any other type

of activity. Moreover, such distinct nature of translation acts, recursively processed over time and space, creates a 'memory' of translation based on prior translational operations and connects them with future translational operations by anticipating what the latter should be like in order to belong to the translation system. Thus, translation marks certain phenomena as belonging to itself and being itself as opposed to all other phenomena. Such process of observation creates an operational closure, which locks translational operations on themselves. This systemic circularity acquires an autopoiesis of its own because nothing else can claim its distinct nature. At most, all external influences exercise only trigger-causality in relation to it. In this sense, translation is not like a conveyor which functions as a system as long as it is set up and maintained by an outside force exercising effect-causality. In other words, translation is a system and an autopoietic (not allopoietic) system.

As to translation's self-organization, the question of structure is bound to arise. What are the elements that form it? To understand this, one has to see that among all types of system, translation is characterized by its social involvements and participates in social communication. Therefore, translation must belong to the category of social systems. As a social system, translation consists of communication events, but of a specific kind. These specific communication events are of mediatory nature. As we have seen, translation involves at least three parties: A, B, and C, where A and C cannot communicate without B (see Section 1.6.2). B mediates between A and C. Thus, TCE (translational communication event) is composed of a mediated part and a mediating part. Yet strictly speaking, the section from $\text{Understanding}_1$ to $\text{Information}_2$, the B part, should be considered as the element of the translation system:

$$A\text{: } \textit{Utterance}_1 > \textit{Information}_1 \cong \text{B: } (\text{Understanding}_1 = \text{Utterance}_2) > \text{Information}_2 \cong C\text{: } \textit{Understanding}_2.$$

$\text{Utterance}_1$, $\text{Information}_1$, and $\text{Understanding}_2$ are not part of the translation system. Thus, neither the sending nor the reception, if we prefer this terminology (criticized, however, by Luhmann in 1995, 139), should be included into (the consideration of) the translation system. The latter's operational boundary cuts them off. $\text{Utterance}_1$, $\text{Information}_1$, and $\text{Understanding}_2$ are the mediated part of TCE. Only the mediating (B) part belongs to the translation system. However, it should be taken into account that the nature of mediation is that mediation cannot be observed without considering the mediated parties. Such 'keeping an eye on the other side' of the marked space is typical of many observing systems, especially of those using meaning in constructing reality (Luhmann 2000a, 61; Rasch 2000, 175). That is why studying/analyzing TCE not infrequently involves juxtaposing the mediating (B) party with either or both of the mediated (A, C) parties. For example, translated texts are more often than not compared with their

source texts, or the effect of the translated message is considered from the viewpoints of the source and target cultures. Yet the mediated parties of TCE exercise but a trigger-causality on the mediating party. The mediated parties cannot translate; they can only voice their recommendations and preferences. Incidentally, thanks to this operational independence of translation, such trends as the theories *Skopos* and *Translatorisches Handeln* or radical types of feminist translation actively intervening in the original text are made thinkable and possible. The mediated parties cannot penetrate the intrinsic operational closure of the translation system whose operational nature is to infer the information of the source phenomenon (utterance), reproduce (re-utter) it in another medium, inevitably endowing the resulting product (utterance) with additional information, which approximates the information of the source utterance, and pass the new utterance on for the final inferential understanding.

Elements of any system are characterized by attributes. Attributes of the translation communication system's elements, that is, translational-mediatory events, vary depending on the type of semiosis that calls for mediation. In the verbal translational semiosis, elements are described in terms of their linguistic properties, textual characteristics (e.g., the genre of the translated text), size of concrete mediated/mediating units (e.g., the length of passages translated in consecutive interpreting), the volume of mediating transactions per a unit of time (e.g., simultaneous interpreting transfers more messages per unit of time than consecutive; or a number of pages set up as a daily norm for written translation at a translation bureau), etc. In the non-verbal semiosis, other attributes, characteristic of the involved media and specificities of interaction, will be at work. For example, when a conductor translates a score of Stravinsky's *Firebird*, a musical translation of a Russian folk fairytale, into a live orchestral interpretation, expressed by words in rehearsals and by gestures during a concert performance, the attributes of several semiotic media—musical notation, language, literary forms, and gesture—will define the orchestra musicians' and, via them, the audience's perception of the translation of the intersemiotically interpreted piece.

Elements also have relations between themselves. Some relations are inert; some are active. Actively related elements of the translation system form thematic groups or subsystems (medical, economic, literary translation). There may be further subdivisions within these thematic groups: for example, different genres of literary translations.

As was conclusively shown by the Russian formalists and later by scholars of the Tel-Aviv–Leuven school, elements of the translation system enter relations (or, in the precise SST terms, 'structural couplings') with elements of other systems. For example, literary translations enter relations with literary system's elements. Translation also establishes connection with other systems, for example, with the political one, when translations take part in establishing or reinforcing idiologemes (Brisset 1996).

### 2.2.2. System/System

Translation may be viewed as a social subsystem among other social subsystems. When translation is considered as a subsystem among subsystems, we will refer to it as a system. Under such circumstances, as was explained above, the marked homogeneity of the overall system is heterogenized, and subsystems present themselves as systems to each other.

The translation system is "equally unequal" with any other function system. Function systems differ in individual characteristics (codes, programs, media). Yet neither of them is higher than another. They are part of a de-centered system with no unilateral control. System may be aligned in different configurations—hierarchically, asymmetrically—yet no system can "control others without itself being subject to control" (Luhmann 1995, 36). For example, no matter how heavy political ideological pressure, suppressing translation's own choices, may be, the politics system is still controlled by translation in the sense that the function of translation can be fulfilled for politics only by translation. Systems are, thus, equal in regard to their inequality, "by being 'equally' distinct from one another" (Moeller 2006, 46).

Function-systemically speaking, translation is equal with other social systems—the economy, law, art, etc. It is not subordinate to any of them. How, then, do we explain the fact that translation seems to be "subservient" and "submissive" to other systems? In discussing relations of translation with other social systems, one should keep two things apart—the social status of the profession and understanding its functional nature. By nature, translation mediates what it is commissioned to mediate. In this sense, it is 'at the service' of other social system; hence, it follows directions and satisfies requirements of commissioning parties. This, however, does not mean that translation compromises its nature or stoops to behave obsequiously. As to the translator's low social status, the translator is not the only professional that does not enjoy the respect s/he deserves. This, however, hardly can be accepted as a reason why the domain of translation could not be considered as a full-blown social 'system' (or 'field').

Intrasystemically, the place, which translation takes among other systems, is further clarified by a form of differentiation. "A system's type of differentiation informs the system of the other systems it must expect in its environment" (Luhmann 2000a, 135). In the case of the function-based system, subsystems view each other as both similar and different systems. As we have seen, they are similar in being (functionally) different, and being independent in one respect makes them dependent in all other respects. According to this principle, translation is independent in the sense that only translation can deal with the problem of growing individualization of social function systems by mediating between them, on the one hand, and between the overall social system with the environment, on the other. No one cannot change or assume the translation system's operational closure; no social system can

communicate without translation's mediation. Yet in all other respects, the translation system depends on all the other systems for solving specific problems it encounters. From the standpoint of the systems theory, there is no need to defend the autonomy of translation. In modern world, translation is autonomous in the operational sense. No other system does what it does. This functional status of translation is guaranteed because society imposes this form of differentiation—functional differentiation—on all of its function subsystems, including translation (cf. 2000a, 134-5). If anything, this can inspire our educated optimism that eventually translation's and TS's status will be universally and unequivically recognized.

### 2.2.3. System/Subsystem

The last type of observation is translation as a subsystem within the overall social system. Although there are no hierarchically organized relations between function subsystems, their places differ in terms of directions in which their functions are exercised along the system/environment axis. Some of them are intrasystemically focused. Others help the system see the environment. Translation is always located on the systemic boundary, whether between subsystems or between the overall system and the environment. Translation (and similar social boundary subsystems and phenomena) may be compared to ears or eyes of a living organism. Translation informs the system of what happens in the environment. As a boundary phenomenon, translation opens the system to the environment and the environment to the system. Yet translation does not carry things from inside outside and vice versa indiscriminately. Rather, translation always filtrates: it renders certain things and puts aside or changes other things. In the latter case, translation closes, if sometimes only partially, the system to the environment or the environment to the system.

In contrast to other social subsystems, translation may seem not well 'formed' or 'compactly' located in the social system. The elusive, protean nature of translation, which is described in different ways—as translation's temporary, fleeting, and ephemeral nature; as translation's being much less organized than other subsystems—is responsible for the diffuseness of translation as a social structure. However, as has already been shown, this diffuseness is hardly surprising if we take into account the mediating nature of translation. Translation is called for only when there is intersystemic or intersubsystemic interaction, and it always mimics (to this or that extent) interacting parties. Translation may contribute to creating new social formations ('fields'), itself remaining seemingly 'shapeless'. However, even in such elusiveness, one may notice what inevitably characterizes all translation: it is always 'located' at the borderline of interacting systems. This is its hallmark. Therefore, diffuseness of translation should not distract us from the important social-systemic characteristic of translation: translation is a boundary phenomenon.

Different subsystems within the system develop different relations with one another. The system may be in different relations with the environment in different periods of its history. Certain relations may require catalytically involved agents (a process is optimized when a catalytic element is present); certain relations may not take place at all unless a certain agent is at work. As a boundary phenomenon, translation often becomes such catalytic agent actively influencing social processes. Translation may introduce new ideas into the inner communication of the system and activate what is there in the society but hitherto has not been fully manifested or developed. Sometimes, translation may become the only means of influencing a relation between interacting social structures. In such cases, translation becomes a *conditio sine qua non* of unfolding social processes.

## 2.3. MEDIATION

> [Not only does it become] possible the integration into semiotic research of objects (properties, phenomena) previously unnoticed or bluntly rejected, but also such an integration becomes a *precondition*, a *sine qua non*, for an adequate understanding of any semiotic field.
>
> —Itamar Even-Zohar

### 2.3.1. Mediation vs. Exchange

The difference schema of translation as a system—mediation—should be kept apart from exchange. Exchange is a direct juxtaposition of one item with another, and it constitutes a two-part interaction. This is how social interaction is theorized within social exchange theory (Calhoun et al. 2002, 81 sq.). Mediation is, however, an indirect juxtaposition and a three-part interaction. Even in the situation when somebody explains a word or notion to another person, in Roman Jakobson's terms, s/he translates intralingually. A (source) is equal to B (mediator): the person uses a word/notion and him/herself explains it (a case of Jakobsonian "re-wording" (2000, 114)), yet there are still three parties all together in the communication: source—mediator—target.

Mediation can be of different types. For example, mediation is practiced in the legal domain (solving conflicts). Legal mediation can also be described as a three-part interaction. Structurally legal mediation and translation are comparable. They both operate according to the formula A → B → C, where A and C are communicating parties and B is a mediator. However, there is a difference between legal mediation and translation. Legally mediating party does not belong to one of the interacting parties. It is always a third party, an independent go-between. Translational mediation is carried out by a party (B) which systemically belongs either to A or C. In other words,

translation always functions as a subsystem of either system A or system C. Translation is always systemically related to one of the interacting parties. Hence, translation strikes us as having a 'protean' nature. This facet of its nature is best of all seen in its semiotic properties: B never speaks a 'B' language, its language is always either the language of A or of C. The proteanism of translation, however, goes beyond and deeper: translation pays its allegiance to ideology, aesthetics, ethics, culture, etc., of one of the communicating parties.

Translation as a type of mediation is structurally solid as a type of mediation whereas legal mediation can be easily 'sliced' into two layers—its legal layer and verbal translation. This does not mean to say that the relations between the two layers are simple or that 'slicing' is always straightforward. If legal mediation is carried out between the parties speaking the same language, then translation will be intralingual; if legal mediation is between the parties using different languages, then a translating party will be required (e.g., a translator/interpreter or a translation bureau).

Mediation is one of the most important mechanisms of creating and maintaining social systems from interpersonal (face-to-face interaction), through the meso-social level (organizations) to social systems of the macro-level such as nations and even mega-systems (systems on the international level, Tyulenev 2010). Georg Simmel wrote about the role of mediation (such as translation) in dyadic relationships making the dyad a triad (1950, 145–69). Simmel distinguishes between three types of the triad, "all of [which] are impossible if there are only two elements" (1950, 145). Importantly, in different terms, Simmel speaks, in essence, about two types of social units—with two and three elements, and "if there are more than three, they [three-element group formations] are either equally impossible [with just two elements] or only expand in quantity but do not change their formal type" (ibid.). Simmel considers different roles of mediation: (1) non-partisan (when the mediator is impartial in relation to the mediated parties), (2) the *tertius gaudens* (literally, "the third who enjoys"; when the mediator takes advantage of the conflict between the mediated parties), and (3) the dominant mediator (intentionally creating division according to the principle *divide et impera* in order to gain power over the mediated parties). An attempt to apply Simmel's categories (1) and (2) to the study of translation was made in Al-Rubai'I 2006 (see examples there).

Another insight into the difference between mediation vs. exchange is provided by the so-called sociology of translation in works by Michel Callon (see especially Callon 1986a in French and its English version—Callon 1986b). Callon theorizes translation as having two distinct properties—displacement and transformation (1986b, 224). Translation not only borrows elements but also, thanks to this borrowing, transforms the target system. Translation introduces a new phenomenon from System A into System B, and this results in a qualitative change. An initially quantitative change (System B's set of elements gains a new element) leads to a

qualitative change (System B is now different as compared to what it used to be before the change occurred). I will dwell on ANT and its application of the concept *translation* in detail in Section 4.3.2.

It is also possible to explain the difference between mediation and exchange in terms of George Spencer Brown's laws of form, where form is created by distinction and indication, which underlie any process of thinking and communication (Spencer Brown 1973, xv). Distinction and indication split the world around us into two separate parts: a notion, which is the focus of our contemplation, and all the rest. Thus, form is split into two parts, one of which is distinguished and indicated. Importantly, the distinguished and indicated part cannot exist as such without the other—not marked—part of the form. The boundary between the two does not preclude moving from one side of the form to the other. Both exchange and mediation imply such moving, yet there is a fundamental difference between the two types of crossing the boundary. Exchange is crossing without returning, whereas mediation necessitates going across and returning. In fact, it is not easy to conduct pure exchange, because crossing from one side of the form to the other implies seeing the form as a common space, uniting the two exchanged phenomena as two sides of one form. In other words, exchange can be executed on a basis, but finding or creating this basis implies juxtaposition of the (two) exchanged phenomena or things. This juxtaposition makes it necessary, at least for one side of the form, not only to cross the boundary and see what is out there, on the other side, but also to return to itself and juxtapose its own value and the value of the opposite side. In this case, the boundary and crossing it acquires the status of a mediator: creating or acknowledging a boundary presupposes creating or acknowledging of a common space—of a form, within which the juxtaposition of the two phenomena is made possible. Thus, exchange is only crossing and mediation is a re-entry of the crossing. In this sense, exchange may also be viewed as a stage of mediation, as crossing before returning.

### 2.3.2. Mediation as Translation

> What 'translation' requires is a deepening sociological discussion, one which takes it as a social activity, as interactive and interpretive praxis, and which also undertakes to analytically distinguish the various aspects and dimensions of translatorial action. [ . . . S]ociology in general has still to rise to the task.
>
> —Martin Fuchs

Translation is an important factor of the social domain. Translation is a special case of mediation. Yet sociologists virtually ignore translation (Fuchs 2009; also Calhoun et al. 2002, 82–6). In what follows, I will dwell on

some fewer examples of translation's being taken into account when social relations are discussed (see also Sections 4.3.1–4.3.3 for more examples).

Hans-Georg Gadamer touches upon translation when he considers language as the medium of hermeneutical experience (1988, 345–51). It should be noted from the very outset, that he discusses verbal communication with interlingual mediation, which is only a special case of communication; yet since Gadamer is concerned with hermeneutics, that is with problems of interpretation as occurring in the process of communication, it is instructive to see how he theorizes this interpretation. He views translation and communication involving translation as an extreme situation when "understanding is disrupted or made difficult," thus explicit mediation of translation "is undoubtedly not the norm in a conversation" (ibid., 346). Communication mediated by (interlingual) translation is considered by Gadamer as an explicit example of implicitly mediated communication. This is the marginalization of translation, not untypical of communication studies in sociology. Translation is mostly viewed as an exception from the rule of 'normal', direct, communication. "Where understanding takes place, we have not translation but speech," states Gadamer (ibid., 346). Speech, as opposed to translation, is viewed as a situation of direct, unmediated understanding. For example, in the mastery of a foreign language, this leads to a stage when "a person is no longer translating from or into his native tongue, but thinks in the foreign language" (ibid., 347). Gadamer goes on to say that "for two people to be able to understand each other in conversation this mastery of the language is a necessary pre-condition" (ibid., 347). This makes the understanding between two people possible, only provided they speak the same language. Only "dependence on the translation of an interpreter is an extreme case that duplicates the hermeneutical process of the conversation: there is that between the interpreter and the other as well as that between oneself and the interpreter" (ibid., 347). In other words, it is only with translation that the communication is theorized as $A + M + B \rightarrow C$, where M is the mediation, A and B are the interacting parties, and C is the resulting communication. Otherwise, according to Gadamer, it may be viewed as $A + B \rightarrow C$.

Another possibility of treating translation as a social phenomenon is found in works by Jürgen Habermas. Although the scholar's primary concern is that of philosophy, the philosophy of language, and logic, I would consider his consideration of translation from a more sociologically relevant angle—how translation affects social communication and what place translation takes in communication.

Habermas introduces his ideas about translation at the backdrop of his analysis of relevant ideas of Ludwig Wittgenstein and Gadamer. For Wittgenstein translation is a transformation according to general rules. Understanding/learning a language when there are no general rules, or when general rules (in the situation of language games of a concrete language) are inapplicable, Wittgenstein conceives of the understanding of language in terms

of socialization, that is "training in a cultural life form" (Habermas, 1988, 145). Habermas goes beyond this model when he speaks of the hermeneutic approach in social sciences. He uses the term 'translation' broadly. For him, as it is for Gadamer, interlingual translation serves as an illustration of a more fundamental mechanism that makes hermeneutics possible:

> Clearly, every ordinary-language grammar opens up the possibility of also transcending the language that it establishes, the possibility, that is, of translating into other languages and from other languages. [ . . . ] The concept of translation is itself dialectical: only where rules of transformation that allow a deductive relationship between languages to be produced through substitution are lacking and an exact "translation" is not possible is the kind of interpretation that we usually call translation necessary. It expresses in a language a state of affairs that is not literally expressed in it and nevertheless can be rendered "in other words." (Habermas 1988, 143–4)

Note that while learning a language, we also learn something fundamental that all languages share and that makes them mutually translatable.

Habermas goes on to metaphorically equating 'translator' (an interlingual mediator) with 'interpreter', a partner in a communication within one and the same language (1988, 145). Habermas, thus, comes to Gadamer's vision of translation. This is what Jakobson meant by 'intralingual' translation (2000, 114). Habermas states explicitly that "translation reveals a form of reflection that we perform implicitly in every linguistic communication" (1988, 146).

By comparing Wittgenstein's and Gadamer's concepts of translation, Habermas shows that Wittgenstein's position lacks dialectics of language development through interpreting his/her partner's language. The two horizons (worldviews of the communicators) move, shift, change. According to Gadamer, the structure of translation as a type of communication is similar to that of any other type of communication: the translator also negotiates his/her way between the languages coming into contact through him/her. Thus, translation helps Gadamer and Habermas to show that language contains not only the conditions of its rules' application and rules of the instructional practice, but also the conditions of the possibility of interpretation (Habermas 1988, 147). The contact of languages or of life forms within one language leads to revisions and "translation is the medium in which these revisions take place and language is continuously developed further" (Habermas 1988, 148).

The next logical step is a further metaphorization of translation in Habermas's discussion. He understands translation as a temporal bridging of the distances between generations: the sons interpret the fathers' views; traditions are handed down from generation to generation and the generations involved interpret circumstances of their living in terms of their

predecessors' traditions and, vice versa, interpret their predecessors' traditions through new conditions of life.

Translation is metaphorized to embrace intralingual and intergenerational mediation and overcomes divorcing translation from other types of mediation. Yet Habermas still considers translation primarily as a way to illustrate hermeneutic understanding which is indispensable in society in order to ensure continuity of intersubjective communication: "Hermeneutic understanding begins at the points of interruption [as is the case with translation—*S.T.*]; it compensates for the discontinuous quality of intersubjectivity" (Habermas 1988, 150). However, we can and should understand social communication broader—as not only intersubjective, but also intrasubjective. Consensus and its interruption should be reconsidered in the sense that our internal dialogues (intrasubjective communication) are often Bakhtinian in nature, full of explicit or implicit polyphony and ruptures, consensus in them is reached also through a sort of translation-mediation, except the process of translation takes place within one and the same person (or more exactly psychic system). Translation is needed even in order to reach such intrapersonal consensus, if we see translation as application of social and psychological filters. This makes translation indeed a ubiquitous social and psychological phenomenon.

Before I go on, I would like to briefly comment on one point related to the role of translation as social mediator in Tymoczko 2006 (p. 16). There, Tymoczko questions mediation as the sole social function of translation. She points out that in certain plurilingual communities translation may function not to mediate but, as is the case in a bilingual community of the Hawaiian nationalists, to attain other goals such as to increase the visibility of social groups and non-dominant cultures. There is no doubt that translation can be used for any number of purposes, and yet all possible ways of social functioning of translation are marginal as compared to its fundamental social function—mediation. It is necessary to distinguish between the central function of translation, such as mediation, which constitutes translation as a social system, and the other, secondary, auxiliary functions, such as a means of increasing social visibility. Secondary functions imply the primary function of translation. Social visibility is increased through translation as a demanded, although not necessary, mediation: the boundary of nationalism (the Hawaiian community vs. U.S. legal officials as in Tymoczko's example) is extended to include the linguistic boundary (which otherwise is suppressed), because the speakers of Hawaiian are bilingual and normally cross it without mediation (unless we count translation which still has to occur in their heads, however imperceptibly, when they shift from one linguistic mode of thinking to the other). Thus, mediation is still there in Tymoczko's illustration, but it is mediation for a different purpose, or one may say it is mediation-cum-something-else. Drawing a line between 'direct' and 'indirect', or primary and secondary, applications can (and should) be done for anything, yet only the function for which a thing is created should be considered its primary

function. One can use the microscope even as a hammer, yet that would never eclipse the main function of the microscope—optical magnification.

### 2.3.3. Other Hypostases of Mediation

> He had come from a different part of the world and from a different society, and she was trying to adapt her conversation.
>
> —Henry James. *An International Episode*

In this section, I will show some other types of mediation which may be theorized as types of translation. Usages such as Habermas's—when he considers intergenerational relations as those involving translation—can be called metaphorical and, therefore, deprecated as imprecise. Yet such usages may be justified from the viewpoint which brings translation and mediation together. The rationale of this viewpoint is going to be discussed in Chapter 4 on medium and form. Here, I will adduce some examples of other hypostases of mediation, which can be seen as translation.

As has been shown, mediation should be distinguished from exchange. The two are different in their structures: the latter being a two-part communication; the former being a three-part communication. From this standpoint, Habermas may be justified in applying the term 'translation' to intergenerational communication. In other words, between the generations of sons and fathers Habermas sees a 'filter' through which all social conventions are sieved and either adopted or adapted or dropped. Two parties' communication is, thus, mediated through a filter. This makes it a three-element communication, that is, mediation.

A filter can be found even in the intrapersonal communication, that is, in our internal dialogues. Between our initial impulses and final decisions, there are always cultural filters at work. Intrapersonal communication is a site where personal motivations are constantly juxtaposed with social norms and conventions. Very often a feeling is mediated by a certain type of utterance or action which the person judges to be the best for the situation at hand. It is helpful that we turn again to Luhmann's conception of communication event as composed of three selections (Utterance, Information, and Understanding) and look closer at why he uses the term "selections." Utterance is a horizon of possibilities, out of which one option is selected to be Information; in turn, Information is also a horizon of options for Understanding to select one option and set aside the rest. A comparable situation can be found at the intrapersonal level, that is, even before Utterance is introduced into the social realm. Intrapersonal selection is not an easy matter as each of us knows from experience and as many literary works testify. Goethe's Faust famously says that two souls live in him and try to separate one from the other:

> Zwei Seelen wohnen, ach! in meiner Brust,
> Die eine will sich von der andern trennen.

Before Faust, Catullus expressed a conflict just as bitter:

> Odi et amo, quare id faciam, fortasse requires?
> Nescio, sed fieri sentio et excrucior. (LXXXV)
> (I hate and love, and if you wonder, how this is possible, / I don't know, but I feel pain and suffer.)

Intense internal conflicts are so characteristic of Dostoevskii's characters which became the basis for Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of psychological dialogue producing a polyphony of voices even in a monologue (Bakhtin 1979).

In his Sonnet 145, Shakespeare furnishes a sort of talk-aloud protocol demonstrating how an emotion is filtered in the process of communication:

> Those lips that Love's own hand did make
> Breathed forth the sound that said "I hate"
> To me that languish'd for her sake;
> But when she saw my woeful state
> Straight in her heart did mercy come,
> Chiding that tongue that ever sweet
> Was used in giving gentle doom,
> And taught it thus anew to greet:
> "I hate" she alter'd with an end,
> That follow'd it as gentle day
> Doth follow night, who like a fiend
> From heaven to hell is flown away;
> "I hate" from hate away she threw,
> And saved my life, saying "not you."

The female character changes her intonation "when she sees" how her words affect her lover. Eventually, she alters her entire message by adding that the object of her hatred is not her lover. The change can be presented as several loops from the first lover to the second and back—from A to C and from C back to A. But C's non-verbalized reaction also played the part of mediator B if we present the situation as an internal dialogue when the phrase "I hate" is pronounced differently all the three times: $A_1 \rightarrow B(C) \rightarrow A_2 \rightarrow B(C) \rightarrow A_3$. Thus, formally, the internal dialogue is the same triad as the triad $A \rightarrow B \rightarrow C$. Without part B, A would not have transformed from $A_1$ to $A_3$. Hence, it can be considered as a situation of mediation. Structurally, the internal dialogue of the female lover is an example of mediation. One can imagine Faust's and Catullus's internal struggles developing in a certain direction, but both persons stagnate in their internal conflict,

among other reasons, because they are caught in an unmediated situation. Once reasoning begins, once a filter/mediator is applied, both internal conflicts will head towards some kind of resolution and exchange will be replaced with mediation.

One cannot fail to notice a resemblance of such situations with what Gadamer described as disrupted understanding. Disruption of understanding requires mediation. Gadamer pointed out that the patently mediated situation is that of translation. This helps us appreciate the intrinsic similarity of intrapersonal mediation passing through all sorts of filters, interpersonal mediation and intergenerational mediation, discussed by Habermas.

René Girard is interested in another type of social mediation which he terms mimetic desire (1963; 1965; 1982; 1996). According to Girard, the individual's desire is socially determined; it is only an illusion that the root of the desire is within the individual. There is always a mediator between the individual and the object of his/her desire (1965, 2). Girard is a literary critic and historian and, therefore, the indirectness of the desire is observed by him primarily in great works of literature. The desire is shown by him to have a 'triangular' structure (1965, 1–52; Fages 1982, 19–27): "Instead of desire being a single linear relation (subject A desires object B . . . ), we have three elements: A only desires B because C . . . has directed his attention toward it" (Kirwan 2004, 17). The individual may learn about desiring something from the mediator whom the individual cannot reach, or the individual may learn about a desire from the close-by mediator. In the former case, mediator gains features of an ideal; in the latter, of a rival. In essence, Girard seems to describe a special case of what Ludwig Wittgenstein, George Herbert Mead, and Habermas theorized as socialization of the individual through language (Wittgenstein 1968; Mead 1934; Habermas 1989b, 145 sq.; Habermas 1989a, 5–43). In Girard's theory, the socializing aspect of language is shown as crystallized in sacred or literary texts. Such texts are a repertoire of potential mediators, the ideal figures whose desires will generate their appreciators' desires (as Don Quixote learning from Amadis de Gaula or a believer from the sacred text). Such texts also contain examples of generating desires (the novel *Don Quixote* . . . shows how a certain individual, Don Quixote, learned from his mediator who was between Don Quixote and his desire).

I will return to the discussion of structural similarity of mediation and translation when I consider the problem of medium and form as applied to translation (see Chapter 4). So far, it will suffice for us to understand that a principal property of translation is that it is a type of social mediation.

## 2.4. Elements, Relations, and Components

Any system is characterized by relations of its elements, or, to radicalize this statement, any system is a set of unified relations. System is also composed of elements, and, underlying the system, there are components. Any discussion of a system must start with stating its difference from the environment.

Such a discussion inevitably leads to the discussion of the operational nature that creates and maintains the bounded system. This is carried out through observation with its selection and indication. There are no environments without systems, and there are no systems without environments. This is a unity of difference playing a crucial role in constituting the pair 'system–environment'. Thus, when we define translation as a system, we single out a difference schema (the mediation of a certain type) which unites the system against the background of its environment, constituted on the basis of the same difference schema. Thereby the two are united in their difference.

Social-systemically, translation can and should be viewed as a system. If translation is denied this status, then the particularity of its type of operations must also be denied: the type of communication events, which was described above as TCE (translational communication event), is postulated to be non-existent. If there is no translation as a system, then there is no non-translation as its environment, either. This leads to a nonsensical conclusion: either (1) there is no such thing as translation or (2) everything is translation. Both statements (1) and (2) do not make sense either ontologically or epistemologically. Indeed, to say that there is no translation means to contradict the facts that we encounter, categorize as translations, and attempt to study and that clearly have their specific nature (TCE). To say that everything is translation is equally nonsensical because beside TCEs there are other CEs (communication events), or, put differently, beside mediation there is exchange and a multitude of other things and they cannot be heaped up together with TCEs.

The unity of difference of the translation system and its environment is the same type of difference that unites elements and relations within the translation system. We have already seen that, viewed from a certain perspective, system is composed of subsystems. This is one way of the system's detautologization. This is the re-entry of the system/environment relations into the system. In other words, the system observes that there is a difference between itself and its environment, and the system introduces the difference into itself. This is how its homogeneity is heterogenized: out of the heretofore-unbroken unity of its marked space new entities materialize—its subsystems. The subsystems belong to the same system and that constitutes their sameness, yet they are different in terms of functions they perform in the overall systemic structure. This is one way to break down the system.

Another way to describe the system's internal makeup is to view the system through elements and relations that make it a system, that is, a unity (Luhmann 1995, 20–3). Subsystems can be compared to rooms in a house; elements and relations—to beams, nails, etc. The subsystemic makeup of the system is referred to as the system differentiation. The element–relation makeup is the system's complexity. The latter increases when the system's differentiation increases or when the system's differentiation changes its form. From the viewpoint of its differentiation, translation has subsystems such as literary translation, legal translation and the like. As

the configuration of the translation system constantly changes because new subsystems appear (machine translation and localization are relatively fresh examples), the complexity of the translation system increases because new subsystems introduce new kinds of systemic elements and new relational contours into the system's 'space'. Thus, machine translation and localization introduce TCEs with new properties and new modes of mediation.

Elements and relations form the unity of difference. Luhmann deontologizes elements: they are not elements unless viewed relationally. The unity of an element is no longer viewed as ontically pre-given: "the element is constituted as a unity only by the system that enlists it as an element . . . in relations" (Luhmann 1995, 22). An inquiry into the ontic properties of the element would lead to the discovery of highly complex facts. This complexity may have its value, but it may as well lead to a confusion or superfluity begging for Occhum's razor. The problem is that the foregrounding of statically considered elements will necessarily cause the dissolution of relations and, consequently, of the entire system. The elements will present themselves as a cross section of systems which constitute one another's environment. If this is done for a purpose and is methodologically justified, it is one thing; if, however, this is prompted by a tradition or is done simply because the researcher does not know better, this inevitably leads to a confusing pile of data which may satisfy curiosity but may hardly be considered truly scientifically appropriate.

In TS, when translation of a certain period in a certain place is studied indiscriminately as a fuzzy cloud of analyses of translated texts, biographies of translators, credos and manifestos of translators' schools, etc., one cannot help wondering what is exactly studied and with what purport. Little wonder, some TS research looks like amorphous descriptions, lists, endless case studies with a low level of or potential for generalization and, therefore, of little relevance to experts studying other periods, places, and types of translational phenomena, to say nothing of those trying to understand the phenomenon of translation in general. Such studies are, in essence, anecdotes with no moral or conclusion drawn. That is why so many research projects in TS never aspire to go beyond the level of their 'local' studies and, therefore, never reach the level of mesotheoretical generalizations. The study of a particular translator's/interpreter's career may be relevant to the three domains: physical, psychological, and social. One can study his/her physical body (e.g., body movements, voice characteristics) or factors related to his/her physical well-being while translating/interpreting (the ergonomics of his/her working environment). One can study his/her psychic system (temperament, psychic processes, and phenomena concomitant with or related to his/her work); one can study psychological conditions of his/her work, etc. Or one can study his/her social involvements, his/her contribution to the social realm. In the first two cases, the methods of research will be physiological or psychological, whereas in the third, what is going to be studied should be investigated only from the standpoint of socially communicated and socially relevant phenomena—social actions.

To emphasize, there may well be cross studies, such as neurolinguistic studies of information processing in the translation or studies of the most common features of translated texts as opposed to originally produced texts from the viewpoint of psychological predispositions of translators, yet these studies should take into consideration the cross-sectional nature of intersystemic interaction and methodologically (re)adjust their procedures. Therefore, such studies should be conducted with the utmost care and methodological clarity. If not, they may produce raw data, comparable to a pile of archaeological finds awaiting a more metholodologically sound sorting-out. Regrettably, listening to presentations in TS conferences or reading articles in TS journals today leaves one cold and unmotivated because not infrequently, research does not rise and does not aspire to rise above petty case studies, incorporating everything that happened to be lying along the way of the researcher. The listener's/reader's curiosity may be whetted to sit to the end of the presentation or to read to the end of the adventurous biography, but it is hardly possible to retrieve anything, bringing them from the micro-level up to the meso-level and thus being applicable to the reader's/listener's own research of a different material.

Deontologization of elements as an epistemological move helps focus attention on a particular system. Elements cannot be dissolved without losing their status of constituents of this or that particular system.

As far as relations are concerned, in the beginning of this section, I defined system as a set of unified relations. The word 'unified' implies that relations do not simply exist, but are also regulated. To address this matter, Luhmann introduces the concept *conditioning*: "A determinate relation among elements is realized only under the condition that something else is or is not the case" (1995, 23).

The translation system is a communication system like any other social system. Hence, elements of the translation system are communication events. Relations between these communication events may be reciprocal: one takes place only provided the other takes place. Indeed, if we return to our formula: TCE = $CE_1$ + $CE_2$, where $CE_1$ occurs between one of the interacting parties and the mediating party and $CE_2$ between the mediating party and the other interacting party, we see that TCE is a combination of reciprocally conditioned relations between its constituents. The mediating party can mediate because the communicating parties need its mediation. But this is the microscopic level, where we break TCE down. Such view is comparable to looking at a drop of ocean water. The true complexity of the translation system is revealed when take a step aside and view several TCEs relating to one another. One example would suffice.

In the middle of the twentieth century, there were two prominent schools of translation in the Soviet Union. They may be presented in terms of the well-known controversy between proponents of the so-called 'free' translation and those of the so-called 'literal' translation (I use the terms 'free' and 'literal' not because I condone such usage but rather because they were and

are still used when this period of Soviet translation history is referred to). Leonid Pasternak was probably the most famous representative of the former, Mikhail Lozinskii, of the latter. TCEs (here, literary translations) of the 'free' nature championed one type of relationship between $CE_1$ and $CE_2$: the TCE had to privilege the social and aesthetic context of the $CE_2$ more than that of $CE_1$. The other type of TCEs, where $CE_1$'s context was prioritized, was aimed at by the opposite school. (Obviously, TCEs of the 'free' translation school were not 'free' cap-a-pie, as TCEs of the other school were not wholesale 'literal'.) For example, translations of works by Shakespeare, Goethe, and other Western European classics made by Pasternak contained quite clearly discernible features of the target culture (Markov 1961). Through his translation, Pasternak responded to burning social-political issues of his own time and culture (target culture). Lozinskii insisted on keeping closer to the source culture; therefore, his translations of Western European classics make the translator's own voice to be heard significantly less. Thus, TCEs entered a certain type of relationship between themselves, which defined the translation system as a whole. The result was a complex network of genres and methods of translation where 'literal' TCEs were counter-balanced by 'free' TCEs. Naturally, both schools of translation entered a sort of competition, thereby conditioning each other's activity.

There may be different distributions of relations diachronically: one tendency at one period of history may be counter-balanced by another at another period. For instance, in the early eighteenth century during the initial stage of a large-scale Westernization of Russia, Peter the Great commissioned translations of a number of Western European publications, yet thematically the translated works were almost exclusively limited to technical and military domains whereas *belles-lettres* translations were very few. In systems-theoretical terms, TCEs, thematically marked as technical or military, dominated the scene as compared to literary TCEs. In the mid- and late-eighteenth century, literary translations gained in popularity and by the beginning of the nineteenth were quite numerous.

Another aspect calling for a discussion concerning elements and relations is that of structural makeup of the system. On the one hand, autopoietic systems, recursively reproduce their operations through operations. On the other hand, they self-organize themselves by producing structures as a result of their autopoiesis. Structures are selections or likelihoods of relations between elements. In other words, elements relate to each other not indiscriminately and not all with all.

Systemic structures can be abstracted from elements and their qualities. In this sense, structures are independent of their embodiment. Yet "this does not mean that every structure can be materialized in every kind of element but that structures endure despite change in their elements and can be reactualized" (Luhmann 1995, 283). Only those relations which are selected from a multitude of possibilities and are sanctioned by the system's set of eigen-values (see Glossary: *Eigen-*) gain structural value. Structures are formed based on

what constraints are imposed on relations within the system. Certain types of translational relations are likelier to occur between TCEs and that is why these relations will be prevalent, thereby structuring the translation system (without, however, making it rigid because other possibilities will still be kept open for passing from the status of potentialities to realities).

The last question I will address in this section is: What is component (as it is used in the phrase "a component of a machine/system")? Component is a crude notion; it is a cross-systemic lump of elements and relations, some of elements may be torn out of their systemic-relational context, described not synthetically, but analytically, more often than not quantitatively rather than qualitatively and thus are treated as components. This notion is, however, too imprecise to be used in a system-theoretically valid description. For instance, when we speak of the translator, we speak of such a cross-systemic lump of elements without a definite and precise systemic reference. Unless we specify the term 'translator', we leave it to the listener/reader to conjecture what exactly we mean—the body (organism) or the mind or the social communications passing through the individual which are part of the social realm. The properties of components are external as regards the system (Maturana and Varela 1980, 77). Including them into the description of the system confuses and unduly complicates the picture. When we speak of the translator or describe translation without clearly delimiting our description in terms of the system(s) targeted by the description, we end up with an amorphous crude pile of components—rather than with a clearly methodologically balanced study.

## 2.5. ACTORS AND ACTIVITY

A communicant may play different parts in the process of communication. In real life, the translator may also play more than one social role: s/he may be a translator/interpreter, an editor, a commissioner (for instance, somebody translates a literary work for his/her own interest or on his/her own initiative). To reiterate, translation as an activity, however, is fully autopoietic in that it depends for its unfolding on its own nature, not on actors.

When we speak of actors, we commonly mean translators as individual human beings. Actors are social beings and express what the system (society) requires; in any case, there is, at most, a set of system-suggested options—there is no limitless independence. To compare with the physical realm, we may walk everywhere, but it will be always either on the ground or some other surface—we cannot fly. Even if translators are reluctant to mediate something that is and as required by one system (e.g., by political power), they do so for a particular reason traceable to another system and thus automatically comply with the requirement of the latter system (e.g., aesthetic values or another political force in the society). It cannot be overemphasized that, from the systems-theoretical standpoint, translation is not dependent on its actors. Translation depends on itself as an activity with its unique

difference schema—mediation, practiced in and for a society or any of subsystems. This is why the translator cannot be put in the center of sociological approaches in TS. To do a research on a translator or a translation product is to show what general translation laws are applicable to this or that particular situation. To be more precise, since the translator finds him/herself in the center of the interaction between several systems, to study translation is to find the resultant force of the interacting systemic factors.

There is another reason why actors cannot be made a benchmark for studying translation. Charles J. Halperin (1985, 2–7) describes how in the past, different nations warred against each other and between them, there appeared frontier states, in which the conquerors and the conquered had to live together despite all their differences. Officially, it was easier for the two nations to keep apart, but in practice a great deal of compromises had to be tolerated and adjustments had to be made on both sides. For instance, foreign religious practices could be allowed even if the religion of the conquerors and the conquered were considered incompatible. In order to keep the contact, at least officially, to a minimum, the conquerors maintained a distance from the subjugated culture and/or religion through mediators—interstitial ethnic groups. For instance, in medieval Spain, Jews who spoke both Arabic and Spanish were used as translators and interpreters. Halperin's concept of frontier states which used interstitial ethnic groups as mediators provides us with an example quite different from the situation with an individual translator. An entire nation, such as Jews in medieval Spain, may be said to have acted as a translation agent. From the systems-theoretical viewpoint, we see that both an individual translator and an interstitial ethnic group perform the same function. Systems-theoretically, it does not matter whether such function was performed by one individual or a thousand, because what we focus on is not a particular individual's performance or biography but the social mechanism of mediation as manifested in translation involving the entire nation.

## 2.6. STRUCTURAL COUPLINGS AND INTERPENETRATION

Translation as a social subsystem is structurally coupled with other social subsystems when it mediates between them. For example, when a legal document is translated from one language into another, translation mediates between (1) two linguistic systems and (2) two social systems represented by these legal subsystems. These two types of systemic interactions are structural couplings. When translation is carried out, certain legal responsibilities are imposed on the translator(s). Translation enters into a structural coupling with the legal subsystem. These are different types of interactions: linguistic and thematic. The latter is the irritation of the translation subsystem by the legal system's code (legal/non-legal). Both, however, are temporary.

Structural couplings are different from another type of intersystemic involvements of translation. When we consider the psychic system's involvements with translation, we deal with an interaction of the permanent nature. The interpenetration of this sort always occurs in human translation. The legal system may or may not be structurally coupled with translation acts; the translator's psychology is structurally coupled with human translation all the time. The permanent and inevitable interaction of translation with other systems is interpenetration.

Another example of interpenetration was considered when TCE was discussed (in Section 1.6.2). TCE was shown to be constituted by two CEs connected by mediation: A + B + C. Strictly speaking, A and C are not part of translation and do not belong to B as translation's element, yet no translation can exist without them as part of its environment with which translation is connected not only by a structural coupling but also by a stronger bond—interpenetration. Yet, to emphasize, neither structural couplings nor interpenetration exercise effect-causality on translation.

Michel Callon's and Bruno Latour's concepts *actor* and especially *actor-translator* or *spokesperson* also deserve consideration here with the view to their application to the study of translation as a social factor (Callon 1989, 15–22; Latour 1987, 70–4). It should be noted, however, that Callon and Latour theorize actors, whether human or non-human, differently from what Luhmann's systemic approach would consider as acceptable. Luhmann insists on the purity of the functional focus: social studies should concern themselves only with what is socially visible and thereby with what has entered the realm of social systemics. Whereas Latour's and Callon's notion of interests may be said, from Luhmannian SST's point of view, to belong to the domain of psychic systems and to be studied by psychology. Yet what is interesting about Latour's and Callon's approach is that they show the 'structural couplings', that is, points of connection, between psychic systems and social systems and thereby shed more light on that aspect of the social.

# 3 First- and Second-Order Observations

> [T]here is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so [ . . . ]
>
> —Shakespeare. *Hamlet*

> The logic of the world is the logic of the description of the world.
>
> —Heinz von Foerster

In order to describe translation fully, it is necessary to distinguish between the following three types of observation: (1) translation observes the difference between the system, for which it translates, and the system's environment; (2) translation observes its own operations; (3) translation observes its own observations. To describe translation enables us to (1) explain its history, evolution, and origin; (2) describe its operation (the laws or, one may say, nature of its operation); (3) make informed predictions about its likely developments; (4) equip its practitioners with a comprehensive view of what they do and provide them with a possibility to adapt to changes in working conditions and requirements. Yet first, the concept 'observation' should be clarified.

## 3.1. CONSTRUCTING TRANSLATION'S OBSERVATION

Observation is understood not in its usual direct sense of seeing, watching, noticing something. Rather, in SST, the notion draws on the abstract meaning of the word 'observation' and develops it to embrace the idea of distinguishing, for instance between intra- and extra-systemic phenomena. Observation, therefore, is defined as handling differences. Observation can also be defined as an operation which consists of distinguishing and indicating.

At its basic and most abstract level, observation was studied by George Spencer Brown who created a calculus with observation as the fundamental principle (1973). According to Spencer Brown, first, in any cognitive and communicative process, a space is cleft in two. Dirk Baecker summarizes this as follows: "One cannot proceed to construct anything, indeed to do anything, without drawing a distinction" (1999, 2). For example, when we call a name (by identifying it with what is named by it (Spencer Brown 1973, 8)), we separate the called name and the corresponding phenomenon from everything else: we say 'a table' and the universe, where everything falls into two categories—tables and non-tables, is created. Yet we not only distinguish between tables and non-tables, but also

we indicate (by saying 'a table') one state of the created universe, or of the two-sided form, as marked, thereby unmarking all the rest. Spencer Brown uses a symbol, which is composed of two joined lines—vertical and horizontal: ┐. The vertical line represents cleaving or distinction, whereas the horizontal line stands for indication.

Distinction and indication are two sides of the same coin, so to speak, because one does not occur without the other. Luhmann also drew on another mathematician Louis Kauffman's symbol of a circular arrow which points to itself (Luhmann 2009, 70 sq.): ↻. Kauffman's symbol reflects the circular nature of the process of distinguishing and indicating, but also it shows the dynamic relation of the point that began the arrow and its environment, passing through which the arrow returns to its beginning. Observation is such dynamic handling of differences between a system and its environment through distinguishing and indicating.

Translation as a social autopoietic system also observes. It has its distinct and indicated properties. Yet although translation is a type of communication, communication properties of translation as a mediator of communication are somehow different from communication properties of the mediated communicating parties. This intuitive feeling makes us think twice before categorizing translation as a communication system. Or even when we do categorize translation as a full-blown communication system, we provide a caveat, for example, that translation can be described as a system within the constructionist paradigm (Hermans 2007a; 2007b). However, constructionism helps discover new properties of studied phenomena and does not just deploy a new conceptual apparatus.

Constructionism is a scientific and scholarly paradigm which is usually seen in contrast with the naturalist approach. Both naturalists and constructionists recognize the necessity to map patterns in the world, yet they differ in the attribution of the origin of the patterns—to nature or to the constructing human mind. Although the relationship between the two paradigms is rather of degrees, because every conception of the world is between the two—a result of empiric studies and an interpretation, a construct of the collected data, constructionism emphasizes the latter aspect. The patterns we identify and study are said to be of our own making. Franz B. Simon compares the world to a text with no pre-given punctuation. The observer breaks down "a continuous sequence of events and behaviors," and this added "punctuation" determines the meaning attributed to the studied phenomenon (1999, 247).

Humberto Maturana recasts the relationship of the observer with the observed in cosmological terms when he writes that "matter, metaphorically speaking, is the creation of the spirit (the mode of existence of the observer in a domain of discourse), and [ . . . ] the spirit is the creation of the matter it creates" (Maturana and Varela 1980, xviii). Maturana denies that this is a paradox and insists that this is how we exist in "a domain of cognition in which the content of cognition is cognition itself" (ibid.).

Many constructivists studying society insist that there is no one nature-given social world (in contrast with the world of nature). There are many constructed social worlds. They are products of the interplay of many factors, such as languages, ideas about how human society is and/or should be organized, and interactions of such ideas—their convergences or clashes. We do gain knowledge about the social world, but it is always somebody's knowledge, which does not mean to say that the described world, or rather, the world's different facets are not real(istic). Constructivist social epistemology postulates both the malleability of human beings and, at the same time, their participation in constructing the world. This is the constructionist's methodological basis for the identification of social patterns (Moses and Knutsen 2007, 192).

Constructionism helps discover the hitherto unnoticed properties of studied phenomena. For instance, if translation can be described as a system, it means translation can be viewed and, therefore, *is* a system. Translation, thus, is said to be a system not only as a product of an epistemological exercise, but also in the ontological sense. The possibility to describe translation as a system means that it *is* a system. If it were not, it would be impossible to construct translation as a system. That is why Luhmann speaks of the responsibility of his theory to test its statements "against reality" (1995, 12). Saying that translation is a system, naturally, does not exclude other possible ways to view translation.

## 3.2. OBSERVATION

In the de-centered modern society with no unilateral control, social systems have to have another mechanism of 'keeping themselves together'. They do this by means of observation. In SST, the concept of observation is defined as handling distinctions in order to indicate one side of the form and not the other (Luhmann 1995, 36; 2000a, 59). The form is thus divided into marked and unmarked parts—system and environment. The marking is based on a distinction by which a system distinguishes itself from 'everything else'. By distinguishing itself, the system indicates itself. Observing distinctions and indicating them is crucial for the system's autopoiesis. Observation occurs on every level of the autopoietic system: on the scale of the overall system and on the scale of subsystems.

To emphasize, the concept *observation* is of the highest abstraction. In an interview, when asked what the advantage of widening the concept of observation to an extent surpassing consciousness was, Luhmann answered that this allowed him to theorize society as a self-observing system (Rasch 2000, 175–6). Social system devoid of consciousness is also capable of observing; hence, it can be described as an autopoietic system. This is true about any social system, including translation.

The observation has two major characteristics. It always keeps an eye on the other side of the form, and it recursively connects prior and subsequent observations (Luhmann 2000a, 61). Both these characteristics are observed in translation described as a social system. It distinguishes itself as the marked space from everything unmarked, yet in order to distinguish itself, it has to keep an eye on the other side of its form (Hermans 2007a, 119–20). It also recursively interconnects communication events, past, present and future, which can be defined as translations.

In this section I will concentrate on different aspects of the translation subsystem's observation and examine which of them help us appreciate translation as an autopoietic system.

### 3.2.1. Observation for Re-entry

Translation is located at the boundary of the system and its main social-systemic function as a boundary phenomenon is to increase the system's environmental sensitivity (Luhmann 1995, 197). In order to do that, translation has to see both the inside and the outside of the system/environment form. Translation, then, re-enters the form 'system/environment' in each of its mediations. In other words, each translated text (of whatever semiotic nature) reflects the relationship of the system with its environment. Each translation act considers the original in terms of a potential mediation: what in/of the source should be retained, what should be modified or discarded. The prism through which translation looks at the original is the system/environment relationship. Translation is an observer, and it looks at its source from the opposite side of the form.

Any text of translation (as well as the process of its production) is the oscillation between the source and target systems. This is the specificity of translation's handling its texts—they are inevitably a re-entry of the system/environment relationship (form) into the system (as the marked stated of the form). I will treat this exciting topic in greater detail in Part II, devoted specifically to translation as mediator between system and environment.

### 3.2.2. Self-Observation

Self-observation is the process of handling the difference between the observing system and its environment with respect to the system itself. At the basic level, the system sees itself as different and, therefore, separate from the environment; at a more sophisticated level, the system sees itself as an observer of the difference between itself and the environment.

The self-observation of social systems does not necessarily presuppose a conscious effort. Self-observation may introduce the system/environment distinction into the system at the basic level. Self-observation enables the system to constitute itself through distinguishing itself from the environment. Self-observation is a fundamental operational factor of

autopoiesis: elements are (re)produced strictly as elements of the system (Luhmann 1995, 37).

In application to translation, the marked space will be translation itself as opposed to anything else. For example, translation can be "profiled against its original," "against non-translated texts," or "against other translations" (Hermans 2007a, 120). Translation in a broader semiotic sense may be juxtaposed with other forms of semiosis. Thus, translation reproduces itself as a certain type of system with its particular distinction.

### 3.2.3. First- and Second-Order Observations

> First order cybernetics: the cybernetics of observed systems. Second order cybernetics: the cybernetics of observing systems.
>
> —Heinz von Foerster

Self-observation of the system may be a complex, 'double-decked' procedure: direct—observation of the system's own operations—or an observation of observations. The first type of observation is about *what* is observed; whereas the second is focused on *how* what is observed is observed. The second type of observation may be replicated ad infinitum: a second-order observation observes a first-order observation, at the same time the first second-order observation may be observed by a third-order observation, the latter by yet another and so on. Does it mean that we deal not only with the first- and second-order observations but also with a third- and fourth-order observations? No, because what is at stake is whether a *what* or a *how* is observed. The first-order observation observes the *what*; the second-, third-, fourth-order observations observe other observations, and, thus, they observe the *how* of observation. Therefore, typologically, there are only two levels of observation.

As far as translation is concerned, the first-order observation is the practice of translating. For example, any translational communication manifests its meditating nature in contrast to the mediated nature of the other parties involved in TCE. This observation does not yet distinguish between distinction and indication, seeing only the object of handled differences. The first-order observation focuses on *what* it observes—on *what* the observing system experiences. It is satisfied with minimal information. Only exceptionally, when puzzled by some things, the first-order observation may look for explanations, but its capacity to process this 'extra' information is still limited. "The first-order observer lives in a world that seems both probable and true [*wahr-scheinlich*]" (Luhmann 2000a, 62). Such is translation practice per se, the explicative force of theory being kept within/by it to a minimum.

The worldview of such shortsightedness ends when the second-order observation starts. This type of observation looks at—indicates—the observation as observation. It uses a distinction and specifies what kind of distinction it uses. The second-order observer's eyes begin to see better and the improbability (*Unwahrscheinlichkeit*) of the first-order observation becomes evident (ibid., 61–2). Eventually, such approach leads to creating a field of study trying to explain how the observed improbability happens to be probable and even normal. William Rasch summarized Luhmann's view on this as follows:

> [A] discipline can be defined not by what it studies but by the constitutive question it asks, and that question [ . . . ] creates its field of study by positing a given, the improbability of which it is assigned to investigate. The social scientist asks, "How is social order possible?" The form of the question, according to Luhmann, is naïve, not skeptical, so that it may point to the real world, which has concretized possibilities. In other words, it suppresses the moment of skepticism in order to constitute an entity, called social order, capable of being investigated. At the same time, it expresses a moment of wonder. It is framed as a question of the form "How is——order possible?" precisely to presuppose the obvious in order to register the "miraculous" nature of the obvious. (2000, 48–9)

It is in this type of disciplinary question that the origin of translation theory should be found, because *au fond* translation theory is a type of the second-order observation: How is translational order (translation) possible?

There is another aspect of the second-order observation as far as translation is concerned. Translation is a second-order observer intrinsically because, as the mediator, it observes observations of the mediated parties (Hermans 2007a, 126–30).

### 3.2.4. Evolution: From the First to the Second Order

Now that we have considered the concept of observation in greater detail, yet another point may be added about the evolution of the translation system. The evolution can be presented as a move from the first-order observation to the second-order observation as was rightly noted by Hermans (2007a, 130–6). Indeed, the translation system's emancipation from other social subsystems' influence started with formulating laws or, rather, hypotheses of translation universals ("laws of interference," Even-Zohar 1990, 58–72), which are, in essence, the development of observations of how translation handled its distinctions as compared to other social activities. In TS, the focus has been so far primarily and almost exclusively on verbal translation. Yet this principle may be applied not only to verbal translation. When Jakobson (2000, 114) and Even-Zohar (1990, 73–4) suggested broadening

the scope of studying translation and embracing other types of transfer, they suggested viewing the translation system as belonging to a larger class of phenomena. Such approaches imply second-order observations based on a more broadly conceived difference schema which goes beyond verbal translation. This is a generalization of translational operations which allows us to embrace other types of mediation. This is a result of the second-order observation, that is, the observation which allows us to notice the fundamental affinity of translational first-order observations with other types of the first-order mediatory observation. Translational phenomena are, thus, considered as part and parcel of a larger semiotic system that includes other semiotic phenomena and inscribes the latter into its respective subsystems (cf. Even-Zohar 1979, 290). Such a stance allows us to look for other types of similar operations. Indeed, if translational operations are shown to exceed verbal mediation and belong to a larger system (polysystem), the question is bound to arise: What is the larger system to which translation belongs? One may say that literary translation may be considered as part of literary systems, but the opening of translation's systemic boundary allows, or at least does not prevent, further generalizations. Why stop at literary systems? We can as well move on to other types of semiosis and apply still more broadly conceived difference schemata. The next question would be: Where shall we stop? In the present study, the limit is the mediation schema. To emphasize, this is possible because we go from the first to the second order of observation.

# 4 Medium and Forms

## 4.1. E PLURIBUS UNUM

The problem arising at the level of second-order observation within a system is to homogenize the heterogeneity of the system's constituents. Second-order observation may intuitively categorize these phenomena as belonging to one and the same system yet finds it difficult to define the common operational denominator for all of them. Systems-theoretically speaking, second-order observation seeks to find the difference schema which allows first-order observation to draw its operational boundary.

Translation students intuitively feel that a certain type of phenomena, even so different as written translation and oral interpreting or one-person translation and relay translation, can be said to belong to the same class of phenomena which is studied as one scholarly object within one scholarly discipline. Within TS, attempts have been made to overcome artificially narrowed definitions of translation, originally formulated within Western European scholarly tradition which fails, however, to give a satisfactory theoretical account of types of translation-like phenomena as practiced in other parts of the world, within other types of culture (Tymoczko 2005; 2006; 2007). Hence, theoretically defining translation is either given up altogether or relegated to practically involved parties, for example translation is whatever is "presented or regarded" as translation (Toury 1982, 27). Another way is to cluster translation with similar phenomena by showing its intrinsic affinity with other types of processing original texts. André Lefevere's ideas about of the similarities between translation and rewriting are considered a "breakthrough" on the way to solving problems of defining translation (Lefevere 1992; Tymoczko 2006, 21). Without belittling the importance of such breakthroughs, it should be mentioned, however, that attempts to broaden the concept of translation go as far back as Roman Jakobson's triad of intra-, interlinguistic and intersemiotic translation (2000, 114) and Even-Zohar's works (1990, 73–4). José Lambert also wrote about the necessity to understand translation in a broader way (2006). Maria Tymoczko suggests that attempts to come up with a definition of

translation as a single category should be abandoned, and translation should be understood as a cluster concept such as Ludwig Wittgenstein's concept of *game* (1998; 2006, 22).

Yet all these ways of overcoming too limited a view of translation are but palliatives, because they do not provide a theoretical basis which would help describe translation as a distinct phenomenon yet keep the description open enough to embrace new manifestations of the phenomenon. This echoes the problem of integrating all social phenomena under the conditions of multiple perspectives, on the one hand, and of respecting the boundaries between the perspectives of the unity of society (Renn 2006, 16).

Tymoczko suggests conducting extensive studies of "words for *translation*" in world languages and detailed analysis of their "connotations, implications, translation practices and actual histories of translation associated with those terms" (2006, 27). Yet no matter how inclusive our 'translation cluster' may turn out to be (and no doubt, this work is as necessary as it is fascinating), we still need to provide a theoretically sound unifying basis on which our findings should be recognized as belonging to the translation cluster. We need to be not only extensive, but also intensive in our approach. If not, if we are looking only for "world's words for *translation*" (or what is called *translation* in English), then we run the risk to miss out a multitude of other words which denote activities which can be shown to have translation-like features and properties but cannot be directly associated with the English word *translation*. If, however, we start looking for something that would be conceptually, and not only lexically, *translation*, then we return where we have started: What activities should actually be looked for? We still have to find out what we are going to consider as translation. Lieven D'hulst seems to point in the right direction for our quest to proceed, when he writes that "we need to look for answers to the "why" questions: e.g., why [do] translation concepts enter migration processes" (2008, 225) and pop up in different scholarly contexts with the meanings and usages which may baffle, if for a minute, the TS scholar? For example, Andrew Chesterman, when explaining the basics of the actor-network theory, states the fact that the meaning of the term 'translation' is somewhat different and even "misleading" for translation scholars, yet the scholar does not make any attempt to pose any of "why" questions (in Duarte, Rosa, and Seruya 2006, 22). Michel Callon, however, did not intend to mislead anybody and explained that "the vocabulary of translation" was his conscious methodological choice (1986b, 222).

Perhaps, the systems-theoretical distinction 'medium/form' might be of help in explaining the essence of the challenge when it comes to conceptualizing translation. It also seems to enable us to understand why some non-TS scholars find it helpful to borrow "our" translation vocabulary.

## 4.2. CIRCULATING MEDIUM AND POPPING UP FORMS

The system always operates on its own terms. Yet an observer cannot indicate what he or she observes without selecting a specific distinction. Observations may be arbitrary because observers are free to single out any features of the systems they observe. Theory also enjoys freedom in how it observes its object(s) but such freedom makes theory responsible to justify the distinctions it chooses as the basis for its observation.

The challenge for scientific observations is to find the least observer-dependent distinction criteria. The advantage of the distinction criterion 'medium/form', which Luhmann borrowed from Fritz Heider, is that it allows us to step aside from the observing subject and draw nearer to the observed phenomenon (Luhmann 2009, 226). Heider was interested by the problem of perception of objects with which we do not have direct contact, as is the case in acoustic and visual perception. According to Heider, indirect perception of physical objects is made possible by air as a medium which we cannot perceive as such but which transmits properties of objects located in it. Objects in the air become forms of air as their medium. Luhmann extrapolates this idea to the notion 'meaning' (*Sinn*). All communicational phenomena are seen as manifestations of meaning, the basis of all communication; and importantly, this viewpoint allows observing them not from 'outside' but from 'inside'. This standpoint reorients us from the observing subject to the observed phenomenon itself: we obtain the ground to subsume different and even disparate manifestations under one core phenomenon or notion.

The variety of translational activities that we try to subsume under one concept of translation is overwhelming to the point of bursting, all the more so in the post-colonial theorization of translation with its multitudes of newly discovered and described translation(-like) activities going beyond Western patterns. One wonders if translation and interpreting should be theorized as two types of *basically* the same activity and if so, on what basis. Should machine translation be considered as another type of translation? All of them seem to be different accidences of the same substance, so to speak, when we apply the difference schema 'translation as interlingual mediation'. Yet they manifest so many differences that the farther we go into the professionalization of translation, the less theoretical or practical issues concerning the three branches, written translation, interpreting and machine translation, apply to all the three. Training of interpreters is obviously different from that of translators, and within the latter students specialize more and more in either human-produced or machine-produced translation (not that either is purely one or the other, both being rather a combination of what the human and what the computer do—Quah 2006; 6–21). New ways of translating (or is it translating at all?), such as localization, still further problematize the unification of translation-related

phenomena. The translation student cannot help wondering: What is it that makes translation translation after all? Is it possible to homogenize the staggering heterogeneity of what is seen as translation-related types of social action?

The Luhmann-suggested distinction 'medium/form' seems to account for this kind of problems better because both medium and form are already placed within a system thereby overcoming distinctions imposed on observed phenomena by an observer placed outside the observed phenomenon or system. In systems-theoretical terms, both medium and form are constructed within the context of the observed system, and, from the systems-theoretical point of view, they do not exist "as such," in a "pre-given" state, outside the system. Thus, the distinction between medium and form is internal to the system.

Medium and form postulate infinite variety and do that as Spencer Brown's two-sided form. Naturally, this requires finding what medium and form have in common. Medium and form are made one distinction by relating them to the notion of coupling of elements (Luhmann 1997, 198). Elements are units constructed by an observing system and are not to be understood as natural constants existing outside the system. Elements "must be thought of as dependent on couplings" (Luhmann 2000a, 103). The coupling of elements may be loose or tight. Medium is characterized by the loose coupling of elements. Loose coupling means "an open-ended multiplicity of possible connections that are still compatible with the unity of an element" (Luhmann 2000a, 104). For example, one and the same word with the same semantic properties may be used for creating any number of sentences. Medium is, therefore, "a definite possibility of making possible indefinite possibilities, a formation of accessible loose connections of definite elements" (Krause 1996, 132).

The medium of translation is social mediation. Mediation qua medium creates a pool of possibilities for translation to select from. Mediation is a loose coupling of elements A, B, and C. Tightening the coupling of these elements would produce different forms of mediation. Defining translation is nothing else but the procedure of tightening the elements of the medium of mediation by applying a particular difference criterion. For example, if the observer chooses to define translation as verbal mediation, it means that out of all possible types of mediation those meeting the requirement of the selected criterion will create a contour of tight couplings which is to be termed *translation*. If the applied distinction is different, the resultant translation system will also be different. What kind of fish is caught depends on what kind of net is cast into the sea. The application of the broadest criterion may make translation and mediation coequal. For example, ethics of translation is generated by broadening the distinction criteria and thereby embracing social mediation as consensus-seeking.

The advantage of the 'medium/form' approach is that such approach can accommodate both traditional views of translation as interlingual mediation and Habermas's innovative intergenerational translation or even

metaphorical uses of the term translation. Indeed, the application of the difference schema 'medium/form' allows overcoming the bias of sticking to distorting but comfortably conventional definitions, in favor of what Even-Zohar called "an explicitly formulated transfer theory" (1990, 74).

Loose coupling may be understood in a factual or temporal sense. The former shows what tight couplings are possible or likely. The observer faces the obligation to select a distinction criterion which will ensue a certain type of tight couplings. If we choose to consider translation in terms of the prescriptive TS (PTS), the likely selection of observed phenomena will be different as compared to the selection within DTS. Obviously, the number of translation techniques and strategies will be different in both cases, at that DTS > PTS.

The temporal aspect presupposes viewing medium as a condition of transfers. Shakespeare's *Sonnet 145* which I used above to illustrate another point, may also be adduced as an example here because it shows us how the triad A → B → C in the temporal dimension turns into $A_1$ → B → $A_2$ → B → $A_3$ where the medium of mediation-translation allows the transfer from $A_1$ through $A_2$ to $A_3$.

There is also a connection to the theory of memory (a delay in the reactualization of meaning). Medium as the continuum of all possible combinations of tightly coupled elements regulates the reuse of elements for creating new forms, that is, their new tight couplings. Medium, thus, exercises its retarding function, because memory puts off repetition.

The form-creating ability of medium fulfils another function of memory—discrimination, remembering and forgetting (Luhmann 2000a, 104–5). The medium of mediation allows certain tight couplings of its elements, which produce communication events (CEs) termed earlier translational communication events (TCEs). It is also thanks to the temporal dimension in its function of memory that certain TCEs are identified as, for example, interpreting or written translation events and then are repeated (reused) or disqualified as worthy of repeating. A variety of TCEs unfolding in the continuum of the mediation medium allows discrimination between them as different forms and at the same time allows recognizing them as belonging to the same medium. The temporal dimension is a succession of temporally organized CEs; memory discriminates between different types of CEs, qualifying some of them as TCEs; then memory regulates which are to be repeated and which are to be discarded as being CEs rather than TCEs. The system remembers the TCEs that it frequently uses to create its forms and tends to put aside and forget the ones it uses only rarely or occasionally. This is how translation theory exercises its system memory in the temporal sense.

Form is a tight coupling of otherwise loosely coupled elements of medium. The difference between the loose and tight couplings defines what forms may be produced in the factual dimension on a certain observation basis as well as the temporal processing of operations in dynamically stable

systems and thereby the existence of autopoietic systems of a certain type is made possible (Luhmann 1997, 199). The relationship between the medium of mediation and translation as its form defines what concrete types of translation may be singled out according to different observation criteria and how these types of translation (forms) are temporally characterized in terms of their succession and convergence with other types of mediation as translation, which ones of these forms are remembered and reproduced within a particular type of translation. This is how translation autopoietically reproduces itself as a system or any of its subsystems. Systems and their units are defined dynamically through the specificity of how a medium creates its forms. Literary translation as a form is related to the medium of mediation differently as compared to legal translation and both of them differ in how they tighten couplings of mediation elements from Girardian mediation with its mimetic desire.

Forms never exhaust their medium. On the contrary, forms constantly regenerate the possibilities of their medium. Fluid media thrive on their forms' protean volatility, which gives the media's limitless variability of forms. New types of translation may vary depending on what mediation is required under ever-changing social circumstances, yet all of these forms, contrary to conventional TS, are defined on the basis of their systemic nature (A → B → C) rather than on an external observer's pronouncements as to what should be qualified as intrinsic and what extrinsic to the system. The 'game'-based description of translation stops half-way, as it were: it postulates the openness and versatility of translational manifestations, yet Tymoczko's post-colonial magnanimity demonstrated in the suggestion to go beyond Western manifestations of translation is, ironically, tied up to a Western term (the English word *translation*), thereby cutting short the proposed quest by imposing a distinction from outside, not quite reaching the internal core of the observed system.

To be sure, the multitude of translation's manifestations should not baffle us but rather enrich our understanding of the phenomenon of translation as mediation. In the optimistic and encouraging words of Even-Zohar, who, following the Russian formalists, notably the literary historian Iurii Tynianov, was the first to see the potential of applying to translation the principles of description, designed for systems with unlimited relations between their elements:

> Admittedly, since handling an open system is more difficult than handling a closed one, the exhaustion levels may be more limited. Perhaps more room will be given for "entropy," which may be quantitatively higher due to the fact that more relations must be taken into account, and more than one center must be postulated for the system. These are "disadvantages," to be sure, from the point of view of the theory of static systems. But from the dynamic point of view, they are nothing of the sort. (1979, 291)

Any form is contingent as compared to the corresponding medium; yet these contingent forms provide access to the otherwise inaccessible medium. One can speak of the medium circulating as a substratum in its strong and better defined forms "popping out" of it. Tight coupling is what is realized now and here, also possibly as remembering or anticipation. Loose coupling exists in the fluidity of non-fixed possibilities between one tight coupling and another. The circulation comes about because forms are stronger than substratum of the medium (Luhmann 1998, 200). The concept of the 'medium/form' distinction provides ways for theorizing translation, keeping clear of both extremes—arbitrariness and rigidity. In order to see this, it is helpful to understand that the distinction between medium and form presupposes the selection of one option (one form) out of many other possible (medium). This brings us back to two-sided forms in Spencer Brown's sense with their marked and unmarked spaces. The selected form is marked as compared to the unmarked pool of the other possibilities of the medium. Thus, the relationship of medium and form is a two-sided form. The specificity of 'medium/form' distinctions determines distinctive features of such Spencer Brownian forms. Although different media impose certain limits on the repertoire of their forms, forms are stronger than their media. Words allow constructing any phrase; money allows paying any price. Of course, media impose limits on what one can do with them. Elements constituting media make them nonarbitrary, yet the latter's repertoire of forms is still large enough, preventing the collapse of the 'medium/form' distinction (Luhmann 2000a, 105). The artificial limitation of medium has led to a crisis of defining translation and distorting its nature by reducing it almost exclusively to verbal mediation. Shifting the focus from the frustrating rigidity of persisting conventions in TS to the dynamics of theorization of translation based on the 'medium/form' relationship promises a way out of the theoretical impasse by understanding that a broader, yet still clearly defined distinction schema is required.

### 4.3. SO, "WHY?"

In this section, I will return to the "why" question posed by Lieven D'hulst, referred to earlier. I will analyze the use of the notion *translation* (not only *cultural translation*[1]) in the works of three sociologists Joachim Renn, Michel Callon and Bruno Latour. To be sure, all the three chose the term translation not to "mislead" translation scholars, but because the way the term is used in reference to verbal translation seemed to them to be the most appropriate term for their sociological research. We would feel baffled or misled by their application of the notion *translation*, unless we found out what distinctions they use, what medium they refer to and what forms result.

### 4.3.1. Social Glue and Translational Behavior

Renn's theory of translatorial relations (*Übersetzungsverhältnisse*) concerns itself with the problem of integrity of modern society. The central question Renn attempts to answer is: How the integration of modern society is possible despite all the differences and differentiations which mark social existence today (2006, 11, 27 sq.)? For example, how can individual social acts be related to each other and form types of social act? The key concept which helps Renn approach this social phenomenon is social translation. According to Renn, the quest for unity of society and for principles of its constitution becomes possible when we cross boundaries between different constituents of society without, however, dissolving or annihilating them. The mode, which helps us accomplish this, is translation, because translation is equidistant from both the construction of unity and the distinctness of social representations with their particular identities. Translation is shown by Renn to be a kind of social glue. Such understanding of translation explains transfers between virtually all sorts of differences. In order to show this universal social applicability of translation, Renn references studies in several disciplines, such as psychiatry, intercultural studies, and Habermas's sociology of rationalization and practicality (Freud 1978, 73–105; Beidelman 1971; Budick and Iser 1996; Bachmann-Medick 1997; Habermas 1999). Renn calls his broadening of the term *translation* "metaphoric" (2006, 17). He is careful to do that by explaining that sociology borrows the model of translation, understood as interaction between two languages, which do not merge through the act of translation, because their interaction does not annihilate their distinctness. Renn ascribes a different meaning to the term, or translates the term 'translation' into sociology (*in die Soziologie zu übersetzen*, 2006, 17).

Renn borrows the notion *translation* stressing its usefulness for the description of social integration. All social acts are different and separate from each other; it is in society that they are clustered, and social behavior, manifested in them, is evaluated based on the projection of previous instances onto later ones. Thus, when the solution of a problem or a certain form of action strategy are transferred to a new context and, based on that, one act is identified as similar to another or as belonging to the same type of social acts; or when the interpretation of one act influences the interpretation of another—one deals with a kind of translation (Renn 2006, 30). (Note that one of the heroes of the next section, Bruno Latour speaks of a similar type of social translation: "Someone is said to be knowledgeable when whatever happens is only one instance of other events already mastered, one member of the same family" (1987, 219).)

Renn's understanding of social translation implies comparing two (or more) individual social acts. Only when they are found somehow similar, compatible or comparable, a more comprehensive translation of the evaluation of one act onto another can happen and lead to identifying the two

as belonging to the same type of social actions. This, in turn, implies a phenomenon, underlying the comparison, the closest TS theoretical equivalent of which seems to be the theorization of translation based on *tertium comparationis*. The TS theory was elaborated in the context of discussing universal translatability by the German scholars Erwin Koschmieder, Wolfram Wilss, Werner Koller and others, as well as by American TS scholars, notably by Eugene Nida in Chomskian terms (1964; see also the analysis in Gentzler 2001, 53–6) and by Frederic Will (Will uses the Latin expression *tertium quid*, 1973). Koschmieder treats translation as a linguistic activity; his theory is based on distinguishing between sign and content. For the sign expressing certain content in the source language, a corresponding sign in the target language is found by identifying a common meaning (*Gemeinte*) between the languages of interaction (1965, 104). Wolfram Wills broadens Koschmieder's approach and speaks of the translatability of texts thanks to the existence of syntactic, semantic and experiential-logical universal categories (1977, 56). Werner Koller's translation model is an application of Noam Chomsky's language model with surface and deeper levels which allows us to reach the *lingua universalis*, a universal, "language-independent" (*sprachunabhängig*) level of semantic metalanguage. Such procedure of moving up and down, from one language surface to the necessary depth and up to another language surface by means of transformations, assures the transfer of meanings and finding corresponding representations (Koller 1979, 150 sq.). TS analyses of these and other similar theories as well as their genesis and evolution can be found in Stolze (1994, 39–42) and Gentzler (2001, 59–65). What is of primary interest for the present discussion is that Renn's logic in using the concept *translation* is comparable with the logic of TS scholars and, hence, translatable from TS into sociology.

Renn considerably broadens the concept *translation*. For him, it is a process of finding two (or more) phenomena identical, comparable or related by virtue of reference to what is postulated as the same fact of reality. The two phenomena are, thus, seen to have the same relationship with a third identity, *tertium comparationis*, and, based on that, they are identified as belonging to the same class of phenomena:

> From the practical [or pragmatic, cf. Renn 2006, 18—*S.T.*] viewpoint, translation between two registers of identification of an individual act takes place between two otherwise distinct registers, between which no equivalent representation (identity) is possible, and uses a third register as a tertium comparationis, so that we find *an arrangement of three intertwined triangulations*. For example, the translation between an intentionally constituted object (perception and reflection) and a semantic type of "such an" object (by this we mean a type of analogy and not a "proposition" or "category") can make use of the material unit as a tertium comparationis. (Renn 2006, 295; translation is mine)

Other forms of translation follow the same pattern, as for instance, the translation between cultures (Renn 2006, 329–30).

Renn is not the only one who uses the *tertium-comparationis*-based model of translation. The latter is also implied in what Gregory Bateson calls translation used in cybernetic explanations, when an algebraic proposition is mapped onto a system of geometric coordinate. "Formal processes of mapping, translation, or transformation are, in principle, imputed to *every* step of any sequence of phenomena which the cybernetist is attempting to explain" (Bateson 1972, 407). Although Bateson equates translation with transformation here, his description of translation-transformation is focused on a transfer from one medium into another. The transfer is that of message content and is possible because the content is related to the media as the *tertium comparationis* to phenomena which are said to be similar or equivalent and, therefore, transferrable one into another. In this sense, Bateson's understanding of translation-transformation is to be distinguished from the aspect of transformation teased out from the concept *translation* by Michel Callon and Bruno Latour (see Section 4.3.2).

Renn singles out translations between registers, life forms (*Lebensformen*), or performative cultures, between problem solutions, rules and meanings, and translations which introduce new possibilities of combining objects and thereby a new type of translational relations (2006, 283, 329, 366, 443). The first three types of social translation are aimed at uniting phenomena, which are said to be identical. The fourth type is used to introduce a new phenomenon into an established set of phenomena by broadening the type of socially accepted identity building pattern. In other words, a translational pattern is extended to a phenomenon, which hitherto was considered as not related to the set in question. To summarize this brief overview, social translation embraces all levels of social integration, including translation in the relations of person with society (2006, 437 sq.).

It is not my intention to discuss further correlations between Renn's theory of translational relations and TS, however fascinating this may be—this should become the subject of a separate study or, if necessary, studies. My goal is to show the connection point between Renn's sociological theorizing with the help of the notion *translation* and translation as it is understood in TS. Apparently, there is a sort of disjunction, even, for a purist, arbitrariness of the use of the term which unnecessarily blurs the line between translation of verbal texts and other types of phenomena; hence, Renn himself calls his use of the term *translation* metaphorical. Yet if we go back to the systemic distinction 'medium/form', we can see that the root of the disjunction is in the difference of applying a different distinction. In TS, translation is seen as a form of the medium of verbal mediation, whereas Renn sees verbal mediation not as a medium but as a form of a more abstract type of mediation—the mediation on the level of "transfers and tradeoffs between almost all thinkable kinds of differences" (2006, 17). There is still two (or more) mediated parties and a mediator, the observer who applies a

*tertium comparationis* and, based on the latter, pronounces the two individual entities 'translatable' or 'translated'.

If we try and apply Renn's theory to describe what happens in TS with regard to defining translation, it may be said that the dominant clustering of social acts defined as translation is by and large West- or Europe-centered: individual acts of interlingual activities are translated into one set 'translation'. This set is characterized by certain properties which correspond to a type of social activity which is seen as common to all of these individual acts. A certain type of activity is historically and intuitively deduced to serve as the *tertium comparationis* for accepting any individual social act into the category of acts known as 'translation' or rejecting it. Maria Tymoczko is one of those who challenges this West/Europe-centered set and especially its tacitly accepted *tertium comparationis*; she suggests broadening the list of properties and including more acts, which, she argues, can be incorporated into the existing set (cf. Renn's fourth type of social translation). The problem is that she provides us with a rather vague *tertium comparationis*—the English word 'translation'. One may also say that she insists on a translation on the level of life forms: some social acts of non-European cultures manifest an affinity with what is called 'translation' in the West and they should be translated to enlarge the cluster 'translation'; or, in other words, translation in its non-European life form should be translated (included) into translation, known as a European/Western life form (but once again, the unanswered question of the criteria based on which we should conduct our extensive data-gathering stalks us).

When Lieven D'hulst pleas for an interdisciplinary model of (inter)cultural translation, in terms of Renn's *Übersetzungverhältnisse* theory, he suggests to find a *tertium comparationis* which would incorporate the usages of the term *(cultural) translation* in TS, anthropology, linguistic ethnography, cultural studies, etc., and allow translating/transferring acts seen as translations between these disciplines. Both Tymoczko and D'hulst suggest a social translation of 'translation' based on a different type of *tertium comparationis* from the one used in TS. By challenging the current TS *tertium comparationis* through which all individual acts are sieved, they plea for a new mediation pattern between different types of translation-related, or said to be translation-related, social acts, or for a deeper medium which would allow a richer crop of surfacing forms.

### 4.3.2. How the Serpent Translates Eve

Translation as a form of mediation, or, more precisley, translation as the form of mediation qua medium, based on yet another distinction, is discussed in works by Michel Callon and Bruno Latour. Translation is one of key concepts ("the central notion," Latour 1987, 108) in their actor-network theory (ANT), or a sociology of translation (*une sociologie de la traduction*).

Translation is understood in ANT as a process in which "the identity of actors, the possibility of interaction and the margins of manoeuvre are

negotiated and delimited" (Callon 1986b, 203). It is also the way fact-builders, people who carry out their ideas and make them facts, enroll and control whomever or whatever they consider necessary for constructing facts. Fact-builders interpret their own interests and the interests of the people they enroll (Latour 1987, 108). Translation includes two important stages—displacement and transformation (Callon 1986b, 224; Latour 1987, 111, 114, 136). ANT studies networks, created for realizations of ideas, consisting of both human beings and whatever else may be involved—animals or technology and machines. The task of fact-builders is to identify and recruit those who are necessary for their projects. This is where translation steps in.

First of all, translation establishes an equivalence (which, however, is constantly questioned by competing parties) of problems involved in a project. For example, the domestication of scallops brings together a socio-economic problem (establishing the production which would satisfy the market) and a scientific problem (studying scallops in order to make it possible to produce them in farms). Having established an equivalence of these two problems, the operation of translation identifies and tries to enroll all the necessary actors—both human and non-human. For example, fishermen and scallops are both indispensible. Hence, their interests should be *translated* into the project of the domestication of scallops—their interests should be understood and recruited so that they would work for the project (Callon 1989, 81).

Note that the equivalence of two problems has a different meaning for Callon as compared to the equivalence discussed by Renn. Renn talks about the equivalence based on a *tertium comparationis* and translation equating different phenomena. Callon speaks of establishing an equivalence of two (or more) problems in the sense of bringing them into one project or dislocating them out of their original (isolated) state in order to relocate them in the common space of interest of the principal actors.

Latour singles out five ways to translate interests of involved parties. The first way is to assure them that you want what they want ("I want what *you* want"). The second is to make them interested in what they may so far have been not interested ("I want it, why don't you?"). If these do not work, "a much more powerful one needs to be devised, as irresistible as the advice of the serpent to Eve: 'You cannot reach your goal straight away, but if you come my way, you would reach it *faster*, it would be a short cut'" (Latour 1987, 111). This is the third way. The fourth way is to try to reshuffle interests and goals by displacing goals or inventing new goals or inventing new groups, rendering the necessary detour invisible, assuring the attribution of responsibility for the project. Finally, the fifth translation is to become indispensable for the parties involved.

I cannot go into details about all these ways of translation. I will limit myself with one example from the third type of translation—as "irresistible" as the serpent's translation of Eve, whose other 'victims' were fishermen and scallops (Callon 1989, 100). So, the first translation caters to

others' interests; the second one, in essence, convinces them that their own way is cut off and a new one, the suggested one, is needed; the third suggests a detour. Latour gives an example from twentieth-century history of shipbuilding. Battleships were built of steel; steel, however, interfered with the functioning of compasses and rendered them unreliable. A group of scientists suggested using gyrocompasses which would not need magnetic fields. The problem, however, was that gyrocompasses had not existed yet. The Navy had to invest in the research; thus the idea would be turned into a product (gyroscope). A detour was suggested. The logic was that ships could not be properly navigated and the scientists did not have investments for the implementation of their ideas concerning the gyrocompass. The scientists wanted to translate both their interest and the interest of the Navy (Latour 1987, 112).

Callon's example about the network, composed of different actors, aiming at the domestication of scallops, which I have referred to earlier, is an example of tracing the translations employed by the three researchers who initiated the network. Callon terms their laboratory, where they gathered and processed all the information they collected on fishermen, scallops, etc., "the center of translation" (*centre de traduction*—1989, 105). In their laboratory, the researchers concentrated all the links to different actors of the network. They also gathered the representative bits of information about their actors and translated them into mathematical, economic, psychological, and sociological languages (Callon 1989, 102). Importantly, the real world is *represented* in the laboratory through samples, believed to be satisfactorily faithful representations of the complex and overwhelming reality. This work of producing these deduced and *manipulable* samples is precisely the work of the actor-translator (Callon 1989, 87–8).

This type of operations reminds of the system's reducing the overwhelming and uncontrollable complexity of the environment in Luhmann's SST (1995, 27). Although Callon refers to L. Thévenot's concept of *investissements de forme*, he also uses his "vocabulary of translation" to describe it: the reducing is done by an actor-translator, and the resulting collection of representative samples is a group of intermediaries less numerous, more homogenous and easier to control with regard to reaching the intended goal (Callon 1989, 87). The actor-translator substitutes items of the real world for their samples. Described in social-systemic terms, one of the functions of translation is also to reduce the environment's complexity and thereby render it more palatable for the system.

In his theorizing of social life on the basis for the metaphor of theatrical performance, Erving Goffman foregrounds, though implicitly, the same property of translation—to turn something difficult to handle into something more manipulable:

> An interaction can be purposely set up as a time and place for voicing differences in opinion, but in such cases participants must be careful

> to agree not to disagree on the proper tone of voice, vocabulary, and degree of seriousness in which all arguments are to be phrased, and upon the mutual respect which disagreeing participants must carefully continue to express toward one another. This debaters' or academic definition of the situation may also be invoked suddenly and judiciously as a way of translating a serious conflict of views into one that can be handled within a framework acceptable to all present. (1990, 21)

In this case, the participants of debates or discussions with the help of socially sanctioned rules of communication mediate between two types of situations—less manageable and more socially acceptable.

Yet the function of Callon's center of translation is not only to be the space where the real world is translated into representations, but to go on and translate all the actors represented into the final project, for example into the production of domesticated scallops. Translation centers may become very powerful means of action at great distances, dominating the translated (known through representations) world, as can be seen in the present-day globalizing world (Latour 1987, 223).

We see the following three types of translations in ANT: translating interests of involved actors, translating the unmanageable complexity of the real world into a set of representations (when the translation center acts as *un centre d'investissement* and *un centre de calcul*), and, finally, translating all the actors and collected representations into an ultimate goal of the project (*traduction ultérieure*). The latter is a final transformation at which all previous translations have aimed. Translation is also described as a chain of translations from those less to more risky according to the ratio of transformations involved (Callon 1989, 105).

Several other aspects of the sociology of translation are also important for the discussion at hand. Translation is viewed as a complex process, during which a problem or problems serving as the basis for fact-building, are identified (problematization), and a controversy among the parties involved develops when the suggested translations are questioned and contested (dissidence). Over the course of translating initial ideas into facts, actors-translators may be changed. Translation may even betray actors-translators who originated it, when they are rejected and the project continues without them.

In ANT, translation is primarily a process whose stages are not always easily distinguishable. Yet each one propels the initial idea towards its realization. The primary actors are spokesmen who interpret participants' interests and translate all participants into the project. The initial stage is referred to as problematization; it identifies potential of creating a network. The next step is mobilization of actors and interests. At this stage, the initial idea is questioned and challenged (or may even be refused altogether). The recruited actors may not admit the roles ascribed to them, yet the involvement of all participants is wholehearted, which does not fail to remind us

of Bourdieu's notion *illusio*, capturing social actors' wholehearted involvement in the social game:

> *Illusio* is [ . . . ] to be invested, taken in and by the game [ . . . ] Each field calls forth and gives life to a specific form of interest, a specific *illusio*, as tacit recognition of the value of the stakes of the game as practical mastery of its rules. (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 116–7)

The stage of this wholehearted dissidence is described by Callon in terms of the famous aphorism "traduttore—traditore": "From translation to treason there is only a short step" (Callon 1986b, 224). Now, new displacements may oust the original ones and new spokesmen may assert themselves. Translation continues, but representations of the social and natural reality begin to collapse, shift and transform. ANT shows translation as a process where there are no fixed roles: any actor may both translate and be translated.

The ANT scholars give their reasons why they chose the concept *translation*. Latour builds on both the conventional linguistic meaning of translation (rendering text from one language into another) and on what he terms as a geometric meaning of translation—moving from one location to another. Translation, thus, reinterprets actors' interests and redirects their activities. Latour translates his understanding of translation into the terms of linguistic translation as follows: "In the linguistic sense of the word translation, it means that one version translates every other, acquiring a sort of hegemony: whatever you want, you want this as well" (1987, 121).

Callon also testifies to a very conscious choice of the concept *translation* for ANT. It is worth citing his entire explanation:

> [The] methodological choice through which society is rendered as uncertain and disputable as nature, reveals an unusual reality which is accounted for quite faithfully by the vocabulary of translation. First, the notion of translation emphasizes the continuity of the displacements and transformations which occur [ . . . ] Displacements occurred at every stage. Some play a more strategic role than others. [ . . . ] Because of a series of unpredictable displacements, all the processes can be described as a translation which leads all the actors concerned as a result of various metamorphoses and transformations, to pass by the [major actors who try to realize their ideas] and their development project. To translate is to displace [ . . . ] But to translate is also to express in one's own language what others say and want, why they act in the way they do and how they associate with each other: it is to establish oneself as a spokesman. At the end of the process, if it is successful, only voices speaking in unison will be heard. The [scallop-domesticating] researchers talk in the name of the scallops, the fishermen, and the scientific community. At the beginning these three universes were separate and had no means of communication with one

> another. At the end a discourse of certainty has unified them, or rather, has brought them into a relationship with one another in an intelligible manner. But this would not have been possible without the different sorts of displacements and transformation [ . . . ], the negotiations, and the adjustments that accompanied them. To designate these two inseparable mechanisms and their result, we use the word translation. The [scallop-domesticating] researchers translated the fishermen, the scallops, and the scientific community. (1986b, 222–4)

In ANT, translation is seen as the mechanism and process by which the social and natural worlds take form. ANT also relates the notion *translation* to social power relations. Translation grants certain entities control over other entities. Hence, to understand power relations requires, first, to define social actors, their associations and constellations and their loyalties. The vocabulary of translation is found to be not only well designed to give a symmetrical and tolerant description of complex processes which constantly bring together social and natural entities, but also to explain the power relations where some assume the right to represent multitudes of silent actors mobilized in various projects (Callon 1986b, 224).

To be sure, there could be other models of explaining social actor-network relationships, yet translation vocabulary is chosen as the most fitting for ANT sociological narrative (1986b, 200). One may agree or disagree with how the term *translation* is applied, but let us recall that we are trying to answer the question 'why?': Why is translation selected as the central concept of ANT?

As we have seen, Callon and Latour are well aware of the linguistic (and also the "geometrical") meaning of the word translation implying, for them, interpretation (of other actors' interests), displacement and transformation. But do we find what is argued in the present study to be the principal feature of translation as a form of mediation—a mediating party? In the above quoted passage by Callon, it is important to note that one of the meanings of translation is "to express in one's own language what others say and want, why they act in the way they do and how they associate with each other"—that is, "to establish oneself as a spokesman" (in the original French: *porte-parole*, Callon 1986a, passim; 1989, 15–22). Latour is more politically correct and calls this actor spokesman or spokeswoman or spokesperson (and also a mouthpiece) (1987, 70–4). This is "a very important word," or rather, notion for understanding ANT (Latour 1987, 71).

Arguably, we apprehend the world through intermediaries. These intermediaries may be scientists, who tell us what the world around us is like and how to make sense of it. Different scientific publications, diagrams, graphs, etc., are also intermediaries between us and 'raw' nature. All these are referred to as spokespersons or mouthpieces (the French umbrella term is *port-parole* seems to be better suited for ANT with its principle of not

separating humans from non-humans, living things from objects, Callon 1986b, 200–1; Callon 1989, 17–8; Latour 1987, 72).

The spokesperson speaks on behalf of something or somebody else, not in his/her/its own name (Latour 1987, 72). This reminds us of the property of translation in the translational communication event ([A: $\text{Utterance}_1$ > $\text{Information}_1 \cong$ B: ($\text{Understanding}_1 = \text{Utterance}_2$) > $\text{Information}_2 \cong$ C: $\text{Understanding}_2$]) that translation does not act on $\text{Understanding}_1$. In Latour's terms, translation speaks on behalf of the interacting parties (or actants, Latour 1987, 84). Who or what is spoken for is represented, and the interaction between two parties is theorized as not possible at all without a spokesperson and representations. This shows the ubiquity of translation as a social phenomenon. There are further details about spokespersons in ANT, for example that they may be changed over the course of the fact-building (Latour 1987, 83), but all these aspects should become the topic of a separate study.

If we apply ANT to the situation in TS with its attempts to define or challenge the existing definitions of translation, Maria Tymoczko, Lieven D'hulst, Susan Göpferich, and others act as spokespersons on behalf of social activities which, in their opinion, could be added to the existing canon of activities called *translation*. They also try to translate other TS scholars into their project. Tymoczko suggests casting a net out for new activities which could be subsumed under the notion *translation*, or an ANT scholar might say that she tries to translate us into her project of creating a translation center for translating other translation-like types of activities into the notion *translation* understood in a broader (than in Western TS) way. But ANT does not seem to provide us with the theoretical apparatus to pinpoint Tymoczko's project's weakness—defining the criterion based on which we should select the net to cast. How big or small holes in it may be allowed to be, so to speak? Luhmann would say that a clear distinction is lacking. Renn would say that we need to find another *tertium comparationis* in order to qualify newly discovered events in such a way that they would be able to join the set of existing translation events, or to translate new events into the existing set *translation*. Callon and Latour follow their objects of study and let the latter decide based on which criteria they bring actors into their network. The suggested criterion—the English word 'translation'—would not trouble ANT.

### 4.3.3. (N)either Sources (n)or Targets

Luhmann's SST theorizes autopoietic, self-referential systems as resulting from the application of binary coding and as requiring binary coding for their differentiation. Without binary codes they cannot exist. Autopoietic systems cannot exist without an environment (this is why it is absurd to blame Luhmann for dehumanizing society, for without humans, social systems would not exist at all), and both the system and its environment cannot

be what they are without a binary code, without the opposition of 'yes' and 'no', without distinguishing between what constitutes the system and what belongs to its environment. It is thanks to binary codes that systems can be autopoietic and, at the same time, the same binary codes help systems break through their constitutive tautological circularities and open to their environment—de-tautologize themselves. In terms of Spencer Brown's laws of form, both the system and its environment are viewed as two sides of the form. This is how Luhmann defines system—as separate, yet inseparable from its environment; this is where Luhmann's theory differs from static theorizing of systems, when systems are seen as theorizable in themselves without contextualizing them in their respective environments.

Understanding this helps appreciate Luhmann's use of the notion *translation* which is different from those discussed in Sections 4.3.1 and 4.3.2. Since he sees social systems as generated with the help of binary coding and describable as two-sided forms, he sets the social space in constant motion where the marked and unmarked states, the negative and positive values require each other, are "translatable into each other" and are of equal value (Luhmann 1997, 224).

Note that Luhmann uses the word *übersetzbar* (translatable). This translatability is possible because (1) one value requires the other and (2) the two options are viewed as being of equal value in the context of the two-sided form. There is nothing new in showing translation as equating the two sides of the "=". What is strikingly new is that translation is understood as going both ways and creates a sort of circularity of the two-sided form: it is impossible to say which side of the "=" is the original and which—its rendering. The two values are of equal value. Moreover, one does not exist without the other. If there is a "+", there must be a "–"; if there is a system, it is bound to have an environment. One requires the other. One obtains the other through the mediation of the boundary. In terms of the 'source/target' relationship used in TS, such vision of translation with these two properties undermines the opposition 'text/its translation'.

According to such vision, as soon as a social phenomenon is created, it calls for an interpretation. Julia Kristeva described this in terms of structuralism as follows:

> The addressee is included within a book's discursive universe only as discourse itself. He thus fuses with this other discourse, this other book [belonging to anterior literary corpus] in relation to which the writer has written his own text. [ . . . A]ny text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. [ . . . ] The word as minimal textual unit turns out to occupy the status of *mediator*, linking structural models to cultural (historical) environment, as well as that of *regulator*, controlling mutations from diachrony to synchrony, i.e., to literary structure. The word is spatialized: [ . . . ]

> it functions in three dimensions (subject-addressee-context) as a set of dialogical, semic elements or as a set of *ambivalent* elements. (Kristeva 1986, 37)

Roland Barthes also theorized the literary text as "a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash [producing] a tissue of quotations drawn from the unnumerable centres of culture" (1977, 146). A verbal text, when written, is being read and thereby (first, intralingually, and then, possibly, interlingually or intersemiotically, when rendered in another language or turned into an opera or a film or a comics book) translated. Whether translation is implicit, as is the case with the most rudimentary level of communication, or explicit, as is the case with the interlingual translation, the two ends of this spectrum are closely connected (Steiner 1975, 471). Also, Roland Barthes, famously proclaiming the death of the Author with a clearly pronounced theomachism, sets the reader free, equaling the author's 'source' interpretation with the reader's 'target' interpretation:

> To give a text an Author is to impose a limit on [the] text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing. [ . . . L]iterature (it would be better from now on to say *writing*), by refusing to assign a 'secret', an ultimate meaning, to the text (and to the world as text), liberates what may be called an anti-theological activity, and activity that is truly revolutionary since to refuse to fix meaning is, in the end, to refuse God and his hypostases—reason, science, law. [The reader in his/her capacity of interpreter of the text is] the space on which all the quotations [from anterior texts, whether open or hidden] that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost: a text's unity lies not in its origin but its destination. [ . . . T]he birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author. (1977, 147–8)

Let us broaden the applicability of the translation principle to include nonverbal social phenomena. For example, imagine that a new rank in the hierarchy of civil service or a new position of the university staff is introduced. Immediately, it is being contextualized, evaluated by public, looked down upon or up to. It is translated into the existing hierarchy. The translation of any thing social is inevitable and unceasing because a new boundary is drawn and the boundary creates a two-sided form of the opposition of the phenomenon, on the one hand, and everything else, on the other hand. The form entails marking the phenomenon and unmarking the rest of the social space. The "+" (marked space) requires its "–". The newly created social phenomenon does not exist without its interpretation/translation. To wonder whether a text means anything on its own without its author and

reader is as futile and meaningless as to wonder whether a mirror reflects anything when not looked into: one side of the form is not a social phenomenon and is as good as non-existent. Translation in the social domain is indeed ubiquitous.

To require the other side is an important property of translation. But it is also crucial to note that the form ascribes the same value to both sides. The value is equal in the sense that both sides of the form are equally necessary for the form to exist: a text or a rank in the social hierarchy cannot exist without being interpreted against the backdrop of something, or even everything else. According to this view, the text or the rank cannot be even called originals, meaning that they were first created and then interpreted. They were created within a certain social space: as soon as the boundary began to be drawn, even earlier—at the stage of its very conception—the other side had already been there. The text may be said to be a translation of the world it recreates or the rank may be said to reflect the social hierarchy which already existed. Yet the text, after being created, and the rank, after being introduced, call for a new interpretation. What is the original and what is the translation? Translation is inevitably a translation of a translation. The tag-putting turns out to be a matter of stopping the natural circularity of phenomena in the social realm. In other words, what is said to be the original of a translation is such only because a certain moment is declared to be the moment zero (when a phenomenon is created). But the phenomenon is never *created out of nothing*! In the literary realm, Julia Kristeva, interpreting Mikhail Bakhtin's idea that all (literary) texts are created based on anterior texts, termed this phenomenon 'intertextuality' (Kristeva 1986, 37). Kristeva defines intertextuality as a transposition of one sign-system into another. Such transposition involves an altering of the thetic position ("the enunciative and denotative personality") which means "the destruction of the old position and the formation of a new one," as is the case in making a text from a narrative or from a carnival scene (ibid., 111). Such destruction-formation may be interpreted as the acquisition by the transposed text of an equal value with the source text, which, in turn, is a transposition of anterior texts.

The equality of values of the two sides of the form still may seem questionable when we consider translation of verbal texts where the source text is always (or nearly always) considered to be of higher value than any of its translations. How can we equalize their values? And what about retranslations? Are they not the proof of inequality of the source and its translation? The answer is that there is a logical flaw in such hierarchization of the source and its translation. The source and its translation do have exactly the same value: the one for the environment equals the other for the system that receives the translation. For instance, for the target readership, the translation is as good as the original for the simple reason that they cannot (do not intend to) compare the two. The reader stays on his/her side of the form, without crossing the boundary. The boundary may

be crossed (i.e., the source may be compared with its translation) only by an observer, who can straddle the two sides and see the distinction based on which the boundary is drawn. Such position is assumed by a critic or a translation student, but not by a 'bona fide' reader. Therefore, a translation is equal in value with the opposite side of the form. As far as re-translations are concerned, they are made by observers, those who are able to cross boundaries—not by 'system-dwellers'. It is the observers who find fault with existing translations and initiate new translations. From the standpoint of the social system which receives something from its environment, the translated phenomenon (the one that was transferred over its boundary) is as good as the phenomenon "out there," in the environment.

The equality is not to be understood in absolute terms but always as equality imposed upon what *may be called* source (the problem with this term has been shown above) and translation by a social party: text/phenomenon B (which is said to be a rendering of text/phenomenon A) is of the same value for system B as text/phenomenon A for system A (somewhere in system B's environment). Texts/phenomena A and B are in the relationship: A = B. For the observer, the equality is, however, problematic: A ≈ B. For the observer, the relationship A ≈ B is tantamount to the relationship between the system (S) and its environment (E), where the environment is always more complex and whose complexity is inevitably reduced by the system: E ≥ S. Hence, for the observer, A ≥ B: the source (especially, if we take a literary classic such as Shakespeare or Dante or Cervantes) is always said to be richer than any of their renderings. This may prompt the observer to undertake or commission a re-translation. Every re-translation draws a new boundary (with a new distinction, for instance, undertaking a new translation of the classic based on a new translation program) and, thereby, creates a new form. A translation of, say, a verbal text meant for bilingual readers is, in essence, an observer's observation open (if not an open invitation) for other observers' observations. In this case, the translation does not posit the '=' equality, but rather the '≈' equality and invites a dialogue about the drawn boundary and the distinction underlying it. Such translation claims to be only an interpretation inviting other interpretations.

Thus, as for the system, into which a translation of a phenomenon from the environment is introduced, the relationship between source and translation may be presented as 'source = translation'; this relationship is comparable to that between the positive and negative value ("+" = "–"). For the observer, standing outside the form, the relationship between source and translation are 'source ≈ translation', or rather, 'source ≥ translation'. Sometimes, translations are described as being arguably surpassing their originals, then the relationship would be 'source ≤ translation', as is in the case of what is said about Ivan Bunin's Russian translation of Henry W. Longfellow's *Hiawatha*, however questionable such 'hyperequality' may be.

One may also recast Luhmann's vision of translatability in terms of Spencer Brown's laws of form (which, in its applicability to translation, I

will discuss in detail in the second part, Chapter 10). There are two axioms of the form applicable to the source-translation relationship. The first axiom, the law of calling, states that "the value of a call made again is the value of the call" (Spencer Brown 1973, 1–2). That is to say, when a name is called, a boundary is drawn. This sets the translation process in motion (a name requires a translation). Graphically, following Spencer Brown, this can be presented as:

Yet the translation being of equal value with its source, or the name, that is 'marked space', being of equal value with the non-marked space of the two-sided form, corresponds to the second axiom, the law of crossing. According to the latter, "the value of a crossing made again is not the value of the crossing" (Spencer Brown 1973, 2). That is to say, translation of a phenomenon from the other, non-marked, side is of the same value as its source. The crossing of the boundary, seen from within the form, is tantamount to not crossing:



Thus, axiom 1 demonstrates that translation is indispensable within a form, whereas axiom 2 shows the equality of translation and its source.

Going back to the proposition to problematize Western conceptualization of translation, in terms of the above described Luhmann's perspective, one may say that the present distinction in the two-sided form-building is that of Western vs. non-Western vision of translational activities. The uniting criterion is translation (or rather, the English conceptualizing word 'translation'). Some scholars propose to go to a deeper level of the 'medium/form' relationship than is currently used by Western TS scholars. Yet this level of distinction is not deep enough. Within such terminology, implied by the orientation towards the English word *translation*, one will still be forced to consider whatever activities are included into the form as either Western-conventional or exotic: we are still left in the space where Western is opposed to non-Western, although they are declared to be of equal value and, therefore, translatable. One may want to consider the potential of the notion *mediation* (vs. non-mediation) according to the formula A ⇔ M ⇔ B (where parties A and B are mediated by the mediator M for whatever purpose or with whatever intention and in whatever semiotic medium).

## 4.4. SELFISH TRANSLATION

Distinguishing between media and forms depends on the criteria chosen for observation. As, depending on the level of observation, any system may be considered as a subsystem of a larger system or any subsystem may be

regarded as a system, any medium may be considered as a form of another medium, and a form may become the medium for another form. This is clear in the case of art where the human body may be viewed as a medium for different postures and movements or a theatrical play as both a form (because it is one of many equally possible realizations of a script) and a medium (for different performances by individual actors) (Luhmann 2000a, 118–9). But the most general of all media as regards psychic and social systems is meaning (*Sinn*). Such systems operate in that they constitute their elements by selecting the latter from a horizon of possibilities (Luhmann 1995, 60). At every moment, only one selection can be made leaving the rest of options as possibilities. The world of possibilities serves as a medium and is inaccessible as a whole, in its totality, but it provides the substratum for forms, which are actualized or put aside, if for a moment, as potentialities. The meaning with its actualities and potentialities of forms is always an interplay of marked and unmarked spaces: what is actualized is marked; all the potentialities constitute the unmarked zone. Moreover, the difference between actuality and potentiality is re-entered on the side of actuality, for if something is actual, it must also be a possibility. Thus, the difference between the medium of meaning and the actualized forms is also a form: "as medium, meaning is a form that creates forms in order to assume form" (Luhmann 2000a, 108).

Translation as a system operates as a form of this general multiform medium of meaning as well. One may say that mediation is a form of the medium of meaning, and mediation, in turn, serves as the medium for translation as one of its forms. At first sight, this theoretical conclusion may seem to be leading nowhere in terms of explaining the phenomenon of translation. Yet it tells us an important thing about the principle underlying the existence of translation qua system. Understanding that translation operates as a form of meaning helps us appreciate it as a meaning-based medium itself. All types of translation, then, may be seen as forms. If one form of translation is actualized, other forms remain virtually present. Actualization and virtualization in social existence mean the presence of a spectrum of forms of translation—some of them may be made socially prominent (for example, acceptable), yet the rest do not disappear. On the contrary, as at any time and in every social group there are people of choleric, melancholic, sanguine, phlegmatic temperaments, at any time and in every social group, one can find different types of translation. When describing the translation in Kievan Rus', Vilen Komissarov asserts that "[t]he translators of religious books usually opted for word-for-word rendering of the source text" (2008, 517), this statement is misleading not only on account of historical data (cf. Mathauserova 1976; Meshcherskii 1978). Reducing Old Rus' religious translation to the word-for-word rendering cannot be regarded theoretically balanced because the assertion neglects (or almost neglects, seeing that Komissarov does qualify his statement with the adverb "usually") the meaning-based nature of autopoiesis of

translation qua system. To be sure, such skewed descriptions of the translation scene are not rare in TS; on the contrary, they are very common and, in fact, tacitly accepted as almost a norm. This might be excused by any number of reasons (the focusing of descriptions, lack of space for presenting a broader and more detailed and complex picture, etc.). However, the real reason seems to be in the same mechanism of scholarly thinking which was described by Sir Stafford Beer as the embrace of the iron maiden, lacking systemics and synthesis (see 1.2). As it is considered normal to sacrifice systemic relations for analytically disjunct elements, translation students do not think twice before replacing the dynamics of systemic equilibrium with de-contextualizing reductionism of intrinsically systemic phenomena, or, in terms of the calculus of indications, to reduce the two-sided form to just one of its two sides (Spencer Brown 1973).

Translation operates as a form of meaning, and therefore, it must be "a form that creates forms in order to assume form" (Luhmann 2000a, 108). In other words, if we apply the distinction 'word-for-word vs. non-word-for-word', where, as is clear from Komissarov (2008, 517), word-for-word stands for literal translation, making the distinction 'literal vs. non-literal translation', then Komissarov asserts that the system of translation in Old Rus' was predominantly 'literal'. This kind of statements is too crude to describe a national scene of translation activities because translation is presented not as a form of meaning, that is, as a horizon of strategies or a range of techniques used by translators. Even one and the same individual translator inevitably uses a range of techniques. This is inevitable because translation is a self-reproducing system which operates as a form of meaning. At any given time in any given social system, any particular distinction should be applied (if realistically applicable[2]) bearing in mind that translation qua autopoietic system operates as a form: if there is a so-called literal translation to be found, then by the same token, there must, in the same period and in the same locale, exist non-literal types of translation. Certainly, the term "literal translation" itself presents a problem in terms of meaning qua medium, for no literal translation can be without a non-literal space. That is to say, if literalness is marked, then there must exist unmarked non-literalness within one and the same translational space, whether the latter is a text or a domain of transfer of cultural items, the well-known fact being that cultural items are not only adopted but also inevitably adapted by the target culture. As I wrote in Section 2.4, despite the fact that the terms 'literal' and 'free' translation beg a question and cannot be considered fully satisfactory (and have been duly criticized), I use them because they are used in present-day TS literature (e.g., Komissarov 2008).

The example given in Section 2.4 about the alignment of translation policies in the Soviet Union in terms of 'literal' and 'free' translation illustrates that translation always reproduces itself as a form of the medium of meaning: if there is 'literal' translation found, there must also be 'free'

translation and the two forms of translation qua medium cannot go one without the other. If there is the predominance of the invisibility of translation, there will automatically arise the visible translation. Sometimes, certain forms of translation, although present, are not given enough publicity (say, literary translations are not granted imprimatur), yet if a distinction is applied, it will cause not only one (marked) state to appear but also the other (unmarked) state. This is what happened to Valerii Briusov's unconventionally (hyper)literal translations of Virgil's *Aeneid* and Goethe's *Faust* (Toper 2000, 116): they have not been published to this day, yet translation qua system produced them in order to reproduce itself as the medium in which one form of translation had to be and was counterbalanced by the other. In this respect, translation's 'behavior' cannot fail to remind us of genes which doggedly reproduce themselves. According to William Hamilton's metaphor defining them as selfish and spiteful, genes seem to do that only with the "selfish" motivation to propagate themselves (Lovelock 2000, 3; Dawkins 1976). When translation is shown as coming closer and closer to its original, this is understood as translation's ultimate desire to come as closely as possible to the original, but the coming closer is always counterbalanced by a going farther (Goethe 1992; Berman 1995; Meschonnic 1999). Translation always ensures its autopoiesis as the medium for all of its forms.

## 4.5. SEAS AND WAVES

> He told us the place was an island; and aren't all islands in the sea?
>
> —Henry James. *An International Episode*

It follows from the previous section that translation qua system always seeks equilibrium (not necessarily quantitative) in the sense that the entire spectrum of realizations of translation is continuously reproduced. Yet different types of observation can be applied to this continuum of the translation medium, and different contours of the system will appear before the observer's eyes. If any particular distinction is realistically applicable to a certain translation scene (the combination of time and space, when and where translation is practiced), then, no matter how prominently, even imposingly, one side of the form (the actuality on the horizon of meaning) might be represented than the other (potentialities for past or future actualities), there must inevitably be both sides. If we say that at some point in history in a certain place, literal translation was predominant, there will necessarily be found free translation as well. If translation is predominantly invisible, there will be some who will start practice and theorize the visibility of translation.

At this juncture, the following question may be asked: What are the system-specific media and forms of translation as a system? Within the systems-theoretical paradigm, the question such as this should be reformulated as follows: What observation criteria are applicable to translation as a system? Such reformulation is necessary because what is to be defined as medium and what is to be defined as form depends on observation (criteria).

We discussed the first- and second-order observations. System operates thanks to the first-order observation. This kind of observation draws its boundary and constitutes the basis for its recursive circularity of self-generating and self-perpetuating. But the second-order observation attempts to grasp the mechanism of the first-order observation; at that, the latter's complexity is inevitably reduced. At any given moment of observation, the second-order observation applies only one distinction criterion. Depending on what criterion is applied to the amorphous sea of translation, a certain kind of forms will be made noticeable, the seascape with a certain type of distribution of waves will come into view. If another criterion is applied, another seascape with another distribution of waves will unfold. One might take James S. Holmes's classification of TS and apply the criteria he suggested to describe translation and its study (2000). With every new criterion, however, new objects will be observed. One might take Maria Tymoczko's suggestions as to how to enrich Euro/West-centric TS with non-Western views and patterns of translation practice and conceptualization and the result will be different with every new distinction criterion. All of these different contours and shapes of translation theory and practice will be different forms of the same medium of translation. If one chooses, however, to see what translation has in common with other types of transfer, translation itself will appear to be a form of the more general medium—semiotic transfer (cf. Jakobson 2000; Even-Zohar 1990; D'hulst 2008; Cattrysse 2001, 5). If one suggests observing translation in terms of its social functions, one sees another, broader medium—mediation, of which translation is only a form among many others. If the observer takes the cue from Tymoczko's suggestion to analyze less prominent social functions of translation such as using translation for increasing a national minority's visibility, the medium of translation becomes the social system of politics where translation figures as a form of social protest or as a form of the social-political medium (Tymoczko 2006, 16).

In the previous section, I discussed translation as a form of the most general medium of psychic and social systems—the medium of meaning. There is yet another aspect to touch upon while discussing translation's 'medium/form' interplay. Art uses the medium of the double framing of an illusion. On the one hand, a work of art has an internal medium that gives shape to the materials used by the artist (e.g., paint, bodily movements, language, sounds); on the other hand, there is an external medium that isolates the forms of art in order to guarantee that they are perceived as

art forms—not simply as forms of the materials with no extra significance (e.g., respectively, as a coat of paint, a series of postures, an everyday verbal communication, noises). Luhmann cites Diderot who defined the paradox of the actor who simultaneously performs and disrupts the created illusion (Luhmann 2000a, 110). As a result, the work of art exists in the medium of double framing.

Understood as a form of the art medium, a translation of a literary work must also conform to the principle of double framing. Put differently, the literary translation is a form of the medium of the double framing of an illusion. On the one hand, the text of the literary translation, when it is read, is perceived as an illusion-creating form and at the same time an illusion-disrupting form. Indeed, such a translation follows the necessary conventions of the literary genre which guide the reader into the "second" reality—the illusory reality created by the artist, as any work of art does, and at the same time the translation as a work of art makes it more or less clear to the reader that s/he reads only a book, a printed text which s/he is holding in his/her hands. In this respect, translation does not differ from any other form of literary art.

Yet there is another aspect of the translated text that is a well-known phenomenon in TS: translation may lend itself for the perception as (1) a text written in this language concealing the fact of it being originally written in another language or (2) translation may more or less clearly signal to the reader that it is a text which was not written originally in this language, that it was first created in another medium. For example, in the intersemiotic translation, (1) a rendering may present itself as the original or (2) a rendering may be evocative of another semiotic system. (1) A musical piece which was created as the result of an emotional event in the life of the composer, but what event gave rise to it is never disclosed, and the music is presented as a piece of music—not *the* piece of music inspired by that particular event. (2) An example for the second case would be the musical compositions when a literary text or speech is transposed into music, and the musical compositions are explicitly presented as inspired by, say, literary texts. In case (2), translation becomes what can be termed as a triple framing because to the double framing of the original work of art, translation adds another framing to disrupt the illusion of being the original. In case (1), although in reality the framing may also be said to be triple (the original's double framing with the translation's added framing), but the translation hides the fact that it is a framing, thus creating an illusion of being the original. Certainly, one cannot fail to recognize in this the mechanisms of domesticating (1) vs. foreignizing (2) translation. I, however, have applied a different distinction criterion resulting in a different pattern of forms of a different medium: translation has been shown as a form of the medium of double/triple framing. With domestication (or fluency, or transparency) vs. foreignization (or "abusive fidelity," Venuti 2008) taken as the distinction criterion, the focus of attention would be on translation strategies in terms of the ratio of source-culture

vs. target-culture elements. Translation as double vs. triple framing would stress the aesthetic properties of translation.

Viewed from yet another angle, translation may be shown as a form of the economy medium if we apply the distinction "more-paid/less-paid" or as a form of the education medium if we consider it from the viewpoint of how helpful it is for intercultural training or foreign language acquisition. The application of any number of distinction criteria to translation as a medium will allow seeing a great deal of its possible forms which, in turn, may be considered media for further forms. Consider, for instance, translation as the medium for theatrical translation as a form and, further, the theatrical translation as the medium for the translation of the Japanese theatre Noh plays into French as a form.

## 4.6. HOAXES FROM A CURIOSITY SHOP?

From the above it should be clear that no exhaustive list of translation-related forms can be possibly compiled because no exhaustive list of translation-related media can exist. Everything depends on observation criteria. Yet in order to present itself or to be defined as translation, a (semiotically broadly conceived) text or the process of its creation must be shown to be a translational communication event. This presupposes establishing a relationship of it as a form to the particular medium—mediation. This medium's unit is characterized by the presence of three constituents, which are in a particular type of relationship to one another: A ⇆ B ⇆ C.

The constituents may be real or fictitious. We know this from literary translation studies, where we come across the so-called hoaxes of (1) passing an original off as a translation or (2) passing a translation off as an original. Schema (1) can be presented as follows: A(→ B → C), where A (original) ≠ ∅, B (translation) = ∅, and C (target text) = ∅; hence, A = C is declared to be A ≈ C (the symbol "≈" stands for the original/translation type of approximate equality). Schema (2) is (A → B →)C, where C is said to be A, although B ≠ ∅ and C ≠ ∅; hence, A ≈ C is declared to be A = C. Certainly, not all hoaxes may be unraveled, but needless to say, ontologically, they remain hoaxes all the same.

This kind of phenomena is usually viewed as curiosities, yet they should be seen as extreme cases of the standard mediation 'medium/form' relationship. Schema (1) claims to be a TCE and that is why, not having any other original than itself (rather being its own original: A = C) and not having passed through the process of transforming the original into the final product [(B = ∅) → (C = ∅) = ∅], it has to invent an original, because otherwise it cannot claim to be what it claims to be. In terms of the 'medium/form' relationship, schema (1) claims to have what any 'real' translation has: a relationship of a mediation form of the mediation medium.

Beside extra-translational factors, the question: "Why in this or that historical period and in this or that locale, is schema (1) or schema (2) realizable?" has to do with the status of translation as a social phenomenon in this particular period and in this particular locale. Translation may be a way to relegate the responsibility of authorship to somebody else or translation may provide access to otherwise inaccessible social space. Translators' "tempering" with their originals, as has been the case with so many literary translations, among other things, should be considered as a variant of the realization of schema (1): the translator passes his/her own ideas off as parts of the original. In the political and economical domain, for example, when a transfer, which may be interpreted as the original, is made on the initiative coming from abroad, from outside the target system, the transfer may not necessarily be announced (although not necessarily be hidden either, as not every technical borrowing is industrial espionage), yet we deal with the same case of (A → B → )C of schema (2). Medieval chronicles or present-day mass media texts, which use(d) parts of several source texts, furnish another example of schema (2). Thus, scheme (2) is not as rare as it is normally considered when the 'medium/form' relationship is excessively narrowed down.

## 4.7. METAMORPHOSES, CLUSTERS, AND RELATIONSHIPS

Media are loosely coupled elements which are tightened up by/in forms. Media can turn into forms and forms into media for other forms because what is a tight coupling of elements at one level may lend itself for a still tighter coupling at another level. Meaning may be said to be the *Ur*-medium for mediation as one of its forms which are without number. Mediation, further, constitutes the medium for translation. Translation becomes the medium for its forms, well studied in TS: written, oral, machine translation. These, in turn, become media for their respective forms, for example, written translation becomes the medium for literary, legal, medical, and many other forms of translation. The literary translation goes on to provide the medium for a variety of genre translations or translations of various ratios of the source- and target-cultures, with the so-called domesticated and foreignizing translations being the extreme cases. This chain of metamorphoses of media and forms may lead us all the way to individual styles of translation. The 'medium/form' relationship serves as the basis for systemic analyses of translation phenomena and provides a perspective, opening up new vistas of media and forms where forms never exhaust their media, but on the contrary, infinitely enrich them.

Forms may cluster elements of more than one medium. For example, theatrical translation uses the medium of translation and the medium of art and may even use elements of other media such as politics (Brisset 1996; Markov 1961). Forms may, thus, appear at the intersections of

different media. For example, intralingual scientific translation (e.g., a term is explained by re-wording) uses language and science as its media. Language will, further, be represented by its oral or written form. An intersemiotic transfer of a painting into a musical piece (as is the case in Modest Mussorgsky's *Kartinki s vystavki* [Pictures at an Exhibition]) clusters the media of painting and music. In this Mussorgsky's piano suite, there is also language 'clustered in' (the paintings are entitled and provided with explanations or descriptions). A further complication is introduced when Mussorgsky's original piano suite is transferred (translated) into an orchestration (e.g., by Maurice Ravel or Vladimir Ashkenazi): the piano original may be considered as the medium for orchestrations or this Mussorgsky's original composition provides the medium for different timbre forms (the piano or orchestra instruments and their combinations). Moreover, the timbre as one of the three basic qualities of musical sound (together with pitch and rhythm) may be viewed as the medium for the piano and the orchestra, which become the media for different forms of this Mussorgsky's suite. In the latter presentation the media of timbre are coupled with the medium of the suite to produce a variety of joint forms.

Forms of the medium interrelate and one can describe their relationships by applying different types of distinction criteria. These criteria may vary from the basic prescriptive criteria, e.g., 'professional/unprofessional', even 'correct/incorrect' (although further criteria should be provided in order to distinguish different forms of the medium of professionalism or correctness), to the most exotic and sophisticated or *ad hoc* criteria, such as when the compiler of an anthology of poetry decides which of existing translations should be included or whether new translations should be commissioned because no existing translation meets the compiler's requirements (distinction criteria).

Forms of a medium may relate to one another in a number of ways. I will draw on Nikolai Trubetskoi's phonological set of oppositions (Trubetzkoy 1969). Forms may be compared (1) in relation to the entire set of oppositions, (2) in terms of relations of the elements within an opposition and (3) by the strength and constancy of the opposition.

(1) Forms may relate to each other in a way that cannot be found in the relationship of any other forms, or their relationship may be found elsewhere. Certainly, these types of relationship depend on the criteria applied. For example, film and theatrical translations may be shown to be in the unique relationship, which cannot be found elsewhere in that they both take into consideration actors' performance. But if we apply other criteria, for instance, the ratio of source- and target-culture elements, then their type of relationship will be found in other types of translation.
(2) Forms may be in privative, gradual, or equipollent opposition. Consequently, the opposition of forms may be exclusive or inclusive. For example, literary translation may be (and traditionally often is)

studied as opposed to all non-literary types of translation: translated communication events are privatively considered as belonging or not to *belles-lettres*. From this viewpoint, the medium of translation is dissected into two parts: literary and non-literary forms. The resultant contour of the translation medium is bipolar. Such research helps to concentrate on a particular form but, as is, more often than not, the case with literary translation, may blind the researcher to other possibilities of dissecting the medium of translation, that is, other forms of the medium of translation fall out of sight of the researcher. Or, to question another recurrent exclusive opposition, why would the entry on Russian tradition of translation privilege the opposition of 'literal (word-for-word)/non-literal' translation (Komissarov 2008)?

The inclusive opposition contours enlarge the scope of their observation to embrace other forms. For instance, if the translation medium is considered in terms of social function subsystems to which translation caters, then the opposition includes any number of forms of translation depending on what function subsystems are distinguished: translation of political, economic, aesthetic, educational phenomena, etc. All these types of translation are equipollent: they are said to be coequal in that there is no aspect that would pair them up in a bipolar set.

Another version of the inclusive opposition is the gradual opposition. In this case, the members are combined to form a set because a certain translational or translation-related phenomenon manifests itself in gradual increase or decrease. When the evolution of translations of a certain (mostly, literary) text is viewed as coming closer to the source, we deal with the gradual opposition of forms.

(3) The strength and constancy of opposition in translation qua system may differ depending on whether the opposition is neutralizable under certain circumstances or constant. Initially, the distinction criterion may place translation types in a poignant opposition such as in the above-adduced example from Kommissarov (2008) (literal/non-literal translation). This strong opposition may, however, loosen up when it is analyzed on a less generalizing basis (cf. for example, the curve of translation types—a continuum from source- to target-orientated translation strategies in Newmark 1988, 45–50). That is why the criterion 'literal vs. non-literal' has been criticized. What is literal translation? Is it the translation made on the level of sounds/letters when the original is rendered in transliteration? This does occur but rarely. Is literal translation the translation made on the level of word-formation patterns? Again, this happens but not frequently. Is literal translation the translation which is vocabulary borrowing or copying the original's syntactic structures? Or is it the word-for-word rendering of the original? Literal translation is never practiced as a pure kind of

> one single strategy. Only certain elements of direct borrowing from the source to the target are usually found. This blurs the borderline in the opposition 'literal/non-literal' making it virtually impossible to categorize any translational phenomenon as literal or non-literal: it will always be somewhat literal and somewhat non-literal (to wit: directly borrowed from the source or from the target culture). The opposition will have to be modified and new distinctions will have to be introduced. Thus, the opposition 'literal/non-literal' translation is strong but not constant; it is neutralizable.

The opposition such as 'literary/financial/military/political/etc. translation' is less poignant than 'literal/non-literal', yet the former is more stable than the latter. Naturally, a literary text may contain, for example, elements (TCEs) of the political domain. But literary TCEs unfold according to their laws and political TCEs according to theirs. They may overlap but still they do not lose their identity and their opposition is not neutralizable as it is the case with the opposition 'literal/non-literal' translation which is viable only at a certain level of generalization and disintegrates upon closer inspection.

# 5 Code and Programs

## 5.1. THE MUSE OF SOCIETY

> MONSIEUR JOURDAIN: Je ne veux ni prose ni vers.
> MAITRE DE PHILOSOPHIE: Il faut bien que ce soit l'un, ou l'autre.
>
> —Molière. *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme*

For an autopoietic system to come into being, it should make a distinction which will become the basis for an indication. The distinction cleaves space and is made because there is a motive to secure a content of higher value. A name is given to indicate the content of value and the name is identified with the value (Spencer Brown 1973, 1). The cleft space becomes subject to self- and other-referencing (or hetero-referencing). This is how the system distinguishes phenomena coming into its view in terms of 'what': What is its own and what is alien? Yet this does not show us how the system determines its structure internally, in what manner its operations are connected to one another and how the 'system/environment' difference is produced and reproduced. In other words, in the case of translation, after the space was severed by translation according to its general distinction ('translation/non-translation'), its 'inside' should be handled according to translation's specific distinction (Luhmann 2000c, 53). The specific distinction is the code used for processing operations within the marked state. It is important to discuss the concept *code* as used in SST because there is no sufficient clarity in TS literature as to why binary codes are used. For example, Andrew Chesterman speaks of using them as of a matter of personal preference: "Like many systemic thinkers, Luhmann seems to like binary codes" (Duarte, Rosa, and Seruya 2006, 14).

To understand coding, one should understand that any processing of meaning requires constructing forms in the medium of meaning. Foregrounding any notion means distinguishing it from 'everything else'—as a result, a form is created with marked and unmarked spaces. This is what

makes systemic studies different from traditional science: the latter concentrated on the unity of a studied phenomenon and considered it out of the context of its involvements with the environment; whereas the former puts the notion of difference in the center of its theorization. As a result, any studied phenomenon is considered not in isolation but in its difference-based interrelatedness with its environment.

Marking something inevitably creates the unmarked zone. The discrimination between the marked and unmarked or positive and negative values is the basis for systemic coding. In fact, the two-sided forms and, hence, coding is universal and found in any cognitive process (Spencer Brown 1973, v, xv); we all code the reality, which we observe and describe, in a binary way; we may not know it, as Molière's Jourdain did not know that he spoke prose (and that there was only choice between prose and verse), but the fact is—we do. In this sense, no third is given. In some subsystems strict measures are taken to exclude a third. For example in religion, the world is presented as the two-sided form of sinful and righteous. How is a third state to be handled? There are two ways to tackle the problem: (1) to penalize (or even ostracise and excommunicate the questioner) and eradicate the spirit of questioning or (2) to make the questioner perform ablutions. The devil is the questioner par excellence because he positions himself outside the form as an extraneous observer. In science, on the contrary, scepticism is considered as a necessary free side of each theory or hypothesis, yet this is only a reformulation of the same problem: "Behind each nomination, there is always the unity of its difference, which it cannot see, i.e., a paradox" (Luhmann 2000c, 55).

When a system assumes a code, it differentiates itself, sets itself apart from everything else. For instance, when religion formulates its code 'righteous/sinful', it sets itself apart from other social systems and sin enters the world (2000c, 54). The 'what' aspect presents itself as the field of the application of the self-/other-reference. Once the initial separation has identified the system's own as opposed to the alien, the internal set becomes a meaning horizon (as is the external set as well, but this does not need to concern us here). The next question the system has to settle is *how* to process the internal meaning horizon. On the one hand, the options available within the meaning horizon are realized and virtualized. On the other hand, all of them, irrespective of their status in terms of realization/virtualization, are distinguished by the system in respect to their connectivity with other systemic operations. This is where the code steps in to structure the system internally.

Importantly, now the code operates inside the system. To use again the form 'medium/form' (see Chapter 4), the code is a double-sided form whose 'inside' presupposes the existence of an 'outside'. Yet this form—the inside/outside distinction—draws its boundary inside the system. This is the internal boundary which differentiates between the negative and positive forms of the system's elements. At this level, code does not act as the sieve through which the system sifts everything according to the criteria of self-/

other-reference. The code is applied to the domain of self-reference in order to secure connectivity of elements. The external boundary separating the system from the environment is left behind. Now the code determines how to treat what is let into and what constitutes the system. In the domain of translation, on the one hand, all social phenomena are identified either as belonging or not belonging to the translation system; this is the external functioning of the translation code 'translation/non-translation'. On the other hand, all translation events are further differentiated and grouped within the translation system as satisfactorily/unsatisfactorily done, as literary, legal, technical, etc. Whatever classification is made, it is based on a particular indication and distinction and a binary code which allows to structure the internal space of the translation system.

Code as a means of social construction is ensured by language. The role of language is understood in SST as the source and mechanism of social autopoiesis. Such view is very different from taking language as an example, model, or inspiration for structuring non-linguistic theory by drawing on analogies with linguistics, as was done, for instance, in structural anthropology by Claude Lévi-Strauss (1963, 19–21, 31–54). For structural anthropology, linguistic structuralism primarily provides an example for studying different types of phenomena—anthropologic phenomena. In SST, Luhmann considers language as the very source and the principal participant of social phenomenology. In fact, Luhmann's view of language is closer to Bourdieu's. For Bourdieu, social order and organization are a result of arbitrary processes of classification, producing social pattern and collective shape of the human world. Classification, thus, is placed at the heart of social construction. No group would be able to identify or be identified without the process of classification. Nor would cultural production be possible: "The classificatory power of language is the fundamental means and ends of all cultural production: to classify is, by definition, also to constitute [and] the capacity to make one's definition of the situation count *as* the situation" (Jenkins 2002, xii–iii). The expressive possibilities of language are based on a 'yes/no' difference. Autopoietic systems are closed systems, yet by creating a negative version of their meaning they open a way for themselves to connect with their 'outside', with their environment. If a 'yes'-option belongs to the system, the corresponding 'no'-option is treated as belonging to what lies beyond the system's boundary, but nothing in the environment corresponds to the system's 'yes' and every 'no' is a result of the system's own self-computation. The world itself cannot be qualified as either positive or negative. Strictly speaking, the difference between system and environment is only that between marked and unmarked spaces (Luhmann 1997, 222). The bifurcation of the communication coding, provided by language, provides consciousness with the option of choosing between one and the other side of the form. The code is imposed by language universally in the social (autopoietic) domain, irrespective of words, themes, motifs, and contexts—all the time and every single moment (Luhmann 1997, 113).

Such vision of language with its binary code changes radically the concept of autopoietic social systems as closed systems. They are no longer seen as existing without environments and determining themselves completely. Rather, autopoietic social systems create all that they use as their elements and they use these system-produced elements recursively. Linguistic binary coding structures all operations of the system as a choice between 'yes' and 'no'. Any choice is inevitably the negation of its counter possibility. The code imposes such interplay between positive and negative possibilities. The 'yes' draws the boundary of the system, yet the presence of a 'no' and, consequently, a choice between the 'yes' and 'no' is always ensured. The closed system also, at the same time, turns out to be open. Therefore, the closure of a system, operating in the medium of meaning, can be defined as "the *control of its own possibilities for negation* while producing *its own elements*" (Luhmann 1995, 445, emphasized in the original).

We do not know the exact provenance of the binary code in language, but such duplication structures all social communication as an autopoietic phenomenon. Hence, "we do not exaggerate when we assert: the [binary] code of language is the Muse of society [*die Muse der Gesellschaft*]. Without its duplication of all signs and fixation of identities, the evolution of society would be impossible" (Luhmann 1997, 225).

## 5.2. REQUIREMENTS AND FULFILLMENTS

The linguistic code calls the entire social system into existence. Over time, other codes develop as individual subsystems self-differentiate. The economy operates according to its own code (payment/non-payment); science, politics, religion, etc., also function according to their own codes (true/false, government/opposition, and immanence/transcendence respectively). In each particular case, the code has to meet certain requirements. They are as follows (Luhmann 2000a, 186):

1. The code corresponds to the system's function in that it converts the function of the system into a guiding difference of connectivity of systemic elements.
2. The code should be complete and cover the entire functional domain for which the system is responsible.
3. The code is selective with regard to the external world.
4. The code is informative within the system.
5. The code is preferential in that it asymmetrically distinguishes positive and negative values.
6. The code is fine-tuned to particular situations by means of modifying criteria.

In what follows, I will apply the above listed requirements to translation qua system.

### 5.2.1. Functionality

From the fact that the code corresponds to the system's function it is clear that it is impossible to see the code, which the system uses, unless the system's function is defined. The function is a focus for comparison. The way the function marks a certain problem (a reference problem) allows the system to come up with multiple solutions which, however, do not resolve the problem, but rather provide the basis for comparing the suggested solutions. Thus, the central problem is always kept open for new selections and alternative approaches. The reference problem is circularly marked as requiring a solution by being marked as a problem requiring a solution:

> The reference problem is marked in the system that looks for solutions by marking the problem. This happens only when solutions to the problem suggest themselves. In this sense, the solution creates the problem it helps resolve. The observational terms *problem* and *function* serve only to reproblematize established institutions in view of possible alternatives or to find out how far one can go in exploring variations without exploding the functional context. (Luhmann 2000a, 138)

If viewed systemically, translation also creates a problem to which it offers solutions. The reference problem translation offers to resolve is increasing the communicative/interactive capacity of the system. Whenever the overall social system as ego faces the necessity to cross the boundary in order to reach an alter (whatever that alter may be), it summons translation to help it cross the boundary. Gadamer defines the problem solved by translation as disrupted verbal communication (1988, 345–51). Habermas goes on to make translation a social mechanism capable of tackling a larger set of social interactional problems, even the problem of interaction between generations and epochs (1988, 146, 148). Actually, translation can be understood even broader to embrace a still larger set of social phenomena where translation mediates (Even-Zohar 1990, 73–4; Lambert 2006; Göpferich 2004; D'hulst 2008; Copeland 1991; Beer and Lloyd-Jones 1995, vii; Franklin 2002, I, 385).

Translation as a system always proposes several possible solutions to a problem. Translation may render the source phenomenon keeping its content and its form as close to the original as the target medium allows. Translation can more or less freely transform the source content and/or its form. These are, however, extremes. Modes of translation's transferring the source are a continuum. Translation transfers certain aspects of the source's content and certain aspects of the source's form while transforming other aspects of the content and form.

Seeing that translation's function is to mediate, its code is, simply enough, 'mediated/non-mediated'. Translation considers whatever the overall social system sees as either mediated or non-mediated. It is up to the overall social system to decide what is mediatable and what is not. This is decided based on

the application of the self-/other-reference criteria; this is where the external systemic boundary is drawn. For translation, however, the external systemic boundary constitutes the internal functional boundary: translation views whatever the system finds mediatable as either mediated or non-mediated. What is mediatable but not yet mediated translation mediates. This logic suggests that translation's and the social system's boundaries do not coincide. Translation applies its code to what the overall social system may identify as alien (thus, not connectible to other internal systemic operations). For translation, what may be alien to the overall social system is the legitimate repertoire of internal elements because the phenomena alien to the overall social system may still be the subject of translation's code 'mediated/non-mediated'.

### 5.2.2. Completeness

The code should cover the entire functional domain for which the system is responsible. According to Spencer Brown, the distinction should be perfect continence, that is to say, "a distinction is drawn by arranging a boundary with separate sides so that a point on one side cannot reach the other side without crossing the boundary" (1973, 1). Any distinction

> contains everything: the indication that the distinction makes; the non-indicated rest of the world, which the indicated is distinguished from; and the distinction itself. It even contains [ . . . ] the motive, the content, the value, and the name of the distinction. (Baecker 1999, 2)

Applying this requirement to translation, the distinction 'translation' distinguishes a particular type of phenomena, drawing a boundary to separate translation from all other types of phenomena qualifying them 'non-translation'. Such distinction covers the entire functional domain of translation. Depending on what type of form we define as translation of the medium 'mediation', we dissect the functional space creating a marked and non-marked state. This implies an a-symmetry of preference: the observer singles out translation (whatever s/he means by that name) as a preferred object of observation in opposition to everything else.

### 5.2.3. Selectivity

The code of the system is selective in that the system uses it to view the external world from a particular angle. In the case of translation qua system, translation views everything in terms of the code 'mediated/non-mediated'. The binary code applies a sort of stencil of the formula A → Mediation → C to everything it comes across. Whatever communication events cannot be described by this formula are left out and whatever is classifiable as a mediation communication event is selected and indicated as belonging to the translation system.

### 5.2.4. Informativity

The selected events mean something in the system's eyes. In other words, they provide information from the viewpoint of the system. Luhmann borrows the definition of information from Gregory Bateson who wrote:

> Information, in the technical sense, is that which *excludes* certain alternatives. The machine with a governor does not elect the steady state; it *prevents* itself from staying in any alternative state; and in all such cybernetic systems, corrective action is brought about by *difference*. In the jargon between some engineers, the system is "error activated." The difference between some present state and some "preferred" state activates the corrective response. The technical term "information" may be succinctly defined as *any difference which makes a difference in some later event*. (1972, 381; emphases in the original)

Meaning and meaning-based systems, such as social systems, reproduce themselves by enriching their set of available options or their horizon, by obtaining information thanks to the difference between the option they have at this particular moment and other options which they see as their "preferred" state. A system chooses that option which will make a difference because it will enable the system to move on to another stage of its development (as the system sees its development).

Differences are, thus, propellers of the system's evolution. Meaning-based socio-systemic evolution is a difference-driven creation of differences, which takes place in the context of the 'system/environment' relationship and which has the status of information. Such procedure of meaning enrichment leaves traces, hints at potential possibilities. Thereby, not only structural complexity is created, but also something unknown, foreign to the system's established communication, is introduced to the system's horizon, something which does not follow the established rule of selection. A deformation results, caused by 'noise' in the meaning creating information, and this deformation stays accessible for the system's self-referentiality, that is, the reproduction of selection rules may now encompass this newly introduced option. This moves the system a step further along its evolutionary path. Reproduction becomes ever more complex and is error activated. It is a reproduction with variations of the meaning's set of options and a reproduction for further evolution. The system's evolution, therefore, may be seen as accumulating differences or putting one layer of difference upon another (Luhmann 2004, 270–1).

In other words, selected events affect the operational makeup of the system: the system reads and develops the ability to understand them. The unseen events are not intelligible for the system and, hence, they do not make or produce any difference for the system's internal operating. Whatever is not found to operate according to the scheme A → Mediation → C

are not seen by the system of translation as understandable, workable, intelligible. The code 'mediated/non-mediated' (or 'mediation/non-mediation') enables the system to distinguish between informative and non-informative communication events.

### 5.2.5. Preferentiality

The code is preferential in that it ascribes the distinction between positive vs. negative values to whatever communication events the system comes across. Any third possibility is thus excluded: *tertium non datur* (Luhmann 2000c, 54; 2000b, 16; 2000a, 186). Usually the positive value denotes the connectivity of operations within the system. Put differently, the system can do something with such operations. The negative value, on the other hand, usually reflects the conditions which can make the positive value possible.

Yet apparently, as the case is with the medical system, the translation system may ascribe operational connectivity to the negative value. In the medical system, "only the negative value, sickness, is operationally connective, whereas health merely serves as a reflexive value" (Luhmann 2000b, 127, endnote 7). Translation seems to be a system similar to medicine. *Mutatis mutandis*, translation can do something with non-mediated phenomena, whereas mediated phenomena describe the goal of the system's handling the non-mediated phenomena and should, therefore, be classified as a reflexive value. (See more in Section 5.3.)

### 5.2.6. Fine-tuning Programs

The system of translation needs the positive value in order to appreciate the negative value. But this leads to a paradox because the system makes its operations dependant on something it cannot change. Indeed, when a translation is accomplished, the system of translation submits the accomplished work to the overall social system or to another social subsystem commissioning a particular translating operation and loses control over its product. Yet, for example, as is the case with law as a social system, injustice is treated as injustice in a lawful manner, the reflexive value eventually is treated as a controllable value. The system, thus, goes into what Luhmann terms "an infinite regress": the system "makes its operations dependent upon conditions which it cannot, and then can after all, determine" (Luhmann 2000b, 17). Therefore, the system has a set of rules, helping it make non-information informative. These rules are programs "with whose help one can decide whether something in the system can be treated as informative or not" (ibid., 17–8). The infinite regress is halted by the distinction 'code/programming'. The operability of the non-mediated is distinguished by the code within the translation system, but how to operate what is operable is prompted by a program. A set of rules determining the way to mediate what is not mediated but mediatable is derived from mediated

phenomena. This explains the phenomenon of re-translations, which do not differ from each other from the standpoint of the basic translation-systemic code which is "nothing but an invariant disposition for interruption of basal circularity of self-implicative autopoietic systems" (Luhmann 2000a, 187). Re-translations, however, do differ from each other and are made possible because within the "invariant disposition" of the code there are different programs, i.e., the rules determining what is satisfactorily mediated and what is not. Programs change but do not overstep the boundary of the code. For example, the way a translation is made in one place and/or under one historical circumstance may be determined by the program requiring a rendering as close to the original as possible. In another situation, another translator may use a different program which prescribes rendering his/her source as compatible with the target culture as possible. Both translators operate according to the same code by turning what is mediatable but not yet mediated into mediated, but according to different programs. Programs are derived from the already mediated phenomena (already accomplished translations) and are applied to the phenomena which are yet to be mediated. In this sense, prescription comes from description and is inevitably preceded by description: one cannot prescribe how to do what is to be done without describing what has already been done and what is taken as a model or, in abstract terms, as a reflexive value for the operable value.

## 5.3. TRANSLATION AND MEDICINE

> Бывают в жизни странные сближенья.
>
> —Aleksandr Pushkin[1]

> Those who think first of the 'things' which are related (the "relata") will dismiss any analogy between grammar and the anatomy of plants as far-fetched. After all, a leaf and a noun do not at all resemble each other in outward appearance. But if we think first of the relationships and consider the relata as defined solely by their relationships, then we begin to wonder.
>
> —Gregory Bateson

In this section, by way of concluding the discussion of the coding translation as a system, I will further belabor the comparison of translation and medicine. As has been mentioned above (Section 5.2.5), translation may be compared to the subsystem of medicine. This may sound strange, yet when seen from the systems-theoretical point of view, such comparison provides an important insight into the nature and social functioning of translation. Indeed, medicine is an interesting type of social subsystems whose code's

positive value is a socially negative value—disease. Arguably, translation is comparable with medicine in this, as well as some other respects.

The system of medicine or healthcare is one of the subsystems in modern function-based society. The communication of this subsystem deals with physical and mental conditions of people. The medical subsystem is orientated primarily towards the environment of the social system. Already here, one cannot fail to notice that medicine reminds us of the orientation which we see in the translation subsystem—towards the outer side of the system. Healthcare practitioners are needed when the human organism can no longer function normally as the basis for social communication. Translation is also summoned when society needs a new inflow of information for its communication to continue or cannot function without mediation. Certainly, the difference between medicine and translation is considerable in what they see in the system's environment and how they deal with what they see. Medicine deals with the abnormal and turns it into the normal; translation seeks out what might be mediatable and, ideally, constructive and useful for the system—it looks for something potentially useful for the system, for the system's difference-based information. Yet what both have in common is the orientation towards the outside of the system.

They also support the system's view of its environment as a necessary condition for its own functioning. Medicine deals with the physical body, with the organic, physical, and chemical processes taking place in the body, and with the brain with all its psychological conditions; it, thereby, presents the body and brain as such outstanding, extra-systemic phenomena without which the internal communication of the social system cannot exist. Translation presents the environment as an indispensable source of information for the system. In the social domain, translation also presents the environment as the phenomenon about whose ever-changing condition the system should always be aware and of whose development the system should always be abreast. In other words, medicine and translation present the system's environment as something the system has to always keep in its consideration, if it does not want to find itself in a precarious and even life- or, rather, autopoiesis-threatening autism.

How the phenomena, observed by medicine or translation in the system's environment, are to be perceived is, however, defined not by medicine and translation, but by the system. With regard to medicine, Michel Foucault demonstrated how views on medical conditions, normality, and abnormality changed over the course of history (1961; 1963). With regard to translation, the dynamics of the criteria applied to assessing translation is a focus of attention within the descriptive trend in translation studies. What translation is or should be is not so much up to translators, but primarily up to the commissioning society or, at least, each translation program is negotiated by the translation subsystem and the overall social system. This explains the wide differences we find in the way translation work is conducted in different places and in different historical periods.

The comparison of communication in medicine and in translation demonstrates another important aspect of their functioning. The description of a disease given by a patient does not constitute the decisive part of the functioning of medical treatment. Rather, the treatment of a disease is based on diagnosis and therapy. Something similar can be observed in the case of translation. Translation functions not so much based on what translator writes or says about his/her translation, for instance in a preface to the translation, but on the transformation process accomplished in the translation itself. This translational transformation of the elements of one system into the elements of another system across the boundary is carried out according to the nature of translation and the criteria applied to translation in that particular chrono-topical (time + place) point of history when and where it is practiced. The description of translation strategy offered by the translator may help to appreciate the translation but may be as misleading as the patient's own description of his/her disease. What the therapy in medicine is based on is the professionally made diagnosis. The patient may be found to be a hypochondriac. The same, *mutatis mutandis*, is true about translation: translation's internal systemic communication is the interaction of its elements taking place in the actual process of translation; the translator's self-description is an external factor, whose structural coupling with the actual translation may be true or imaginary or partly the former and partly the latter.

Perhaps, the most enlightening convergence of medicine and translation is the way their codes operate. The positive value of the medical binary code is 'ill'; the negative, 'healthy'. This may sound paradoxical, seeing that medicine's goal is to heal, that is, to make a sick person, healthy. Yet the distribution of values will be clear, if one looks at them from the viewpoint of systemic communication.

> Distinguishing between *sick* and *nonsick* with respect to particular corporeal reactions and the construction of "disease entities" hence is not determined biologically but socially. The distinction is a feature of observation (of the "map") but not of the phenomena observed (not of the "landscape"). Moreover, the localization of causes for those observed phenomena in a biological, psychic, or social system or in one of its environments is a socially determined "punctuation" [the manner in which internal medical systemic communication, in itself continuous and undifferentiated, is determined] of the corresponding system/environment interaction. (Simon 1999, 186)

Health is normally valued as a positive state, yet from the point of view of medicine, the generally preferred state of health is not positive, but negative. Medical system's communication is propelled by looking for ways to treat a disease. Once the state of health is reached, medicine is dismissed as unnecessary, and its communication ceases with regard to this particular case. Thus,

what is generally perceived as positive (health), turns out to be negative in terms of medical communication, which thrives on what is generally viewed as negative (illness). The positive becomes the negative and vice versa.

How can this state of affairs be accounted for? The key feature of systemic communication is the connectivity of its elements. The connectivity of medical communication is ensured by illnesses, not by health. There are different illnesses and only one health; that is why, from the viewpoint of medicine, illnesses differentiate, whereas health is problematic and empty. Although the medical treatment sets health as its goal, health lacks connectivity for medicine's own systemic communication. Diseases and their treatments can be discussed, but there is nothing the medical system can do with health (Baraldi, Corsi, and Esposito 1997, 116–7).

This can be also described in terms of Spencer Brown's laws of form. Disease is marked as a preferred state from the viewpoint of the medical system. Health, on the other hand, takes the unmarked position. The medical system does not operate with health which turns out to be an empty correlate of disease. In other words, the system is motivated by disease but has nothing else to do when the patient is cured and healthy condition is restored. Disease is informative for the medical system, whereas health is a barren terrain with no distinctive features which would stimulate the system's functioning. Therefore, "no one (not even the World Health Organization) thus far has ultimately succeeded in establishing a satisfying and generally acceptable definition of health, though it seems to be relatively easy to agree on a definition of illness" (Simon 1999, 186).

Let us apply these observations to translation qua system. Translation's binary code is 'mediated/non-mediated' (or 'transferred/non-transferred' or 'rendered/non-rendered'). Society commissions a translation of a certain original (not only verbal, but belonging to any semiotic system). Translation system steps in when different ways of rendering the source text are gauged. Only translation possesses the tools of transforming the source text into the target text. No other social function system can deal with this problem. What can be seen as a negative state of affairs from the viewpoint of the commissioning social system—the inaccessibility of the original text or the curse of Babel is exactly what triggers communication within translation subsystem. Thus, the non-transferred or non-rendered phenomenon provides the opportunity for translation system's elements to connect with each other. However, once translation is done, that is, when the non-transferred, non-rendered is transferred or rendered, there is nothing else translation can do about it. The possibility of connectivity disappears and the communication of translation system should look for possibilities of continuing itself elsewhere. The positive value in terms of translation system's communication is exhausted and turns into the negative value. As we have seen, this is exactly what happens within the system of medicine: once health is reached, medical communication turns to other cases of disease, and the continuity of communication is sought there.

One may, however, ask: How can the phenomenon of re-translation be explained? The comparison with medicine, again, helps us to answer this question. What is healthy in one historical period or in one type of society may be considered non-healthy in another place and/or in another epoch and then medical treatments are applied to what is newly identified as disease. What may be found a satisfactory translation here and now, may be found unsatisfactory elsewhere, and, consequently, the translation process will be started all over again. This is the difference between the universal code of translation (mediated/non-mediated) and its multifarious and chrono-topically sensitive programs. The code, once applied, leads translation to its goal—rendering what is not rendered; the programs allow the re-application of the code depending on the criteria established in a particular chrono-topical juncture.

To summarize, in Part I, translation has been discussed as a social system, that is, an autopoietic system. In modern society, translation has self-differentiated based on its social function, which is to facilitate inter-systemic interaction—or, to mediate. Translation is characterized by its unique nature, that is, the way it operates and handles elements of social communication. The specificity of its operations draws a boundary which differentiates translation from any other type of social systems. Yet translation enters structural couplings with other social systems. Thus, one speaks of operational closure of translation qua system and of its interactional openness.

Translation as an autopoietic system has its elements, the mediating core of translation communication acts, which develop relations between themselves and, thereby, form structures. The relations between elements and corresponding structures are distinguished based on the criteria applied to observation. Translation is a complex network of media and forms. Once again, what is to be viewed as a medium and what forms can be observed as manifestations of this medium, depends on the observer's viewpoint. As any autopoietic system, translation observes itself at the level of its operations (first-order observation) and at the level of observing its own observation (second-order observation). The development of the second-order observation further proves the status of translation as a fully differentiated, fully fledged social system with its own self-descriptive apparatus which enables it to formulate its norms and establish institutions for monitoring its operations.

Translation has its code, by virtue of which translation distinguishes communication events which are operable and which are not—those communication events which are not mediated/rendered/transferred are to be mediated/rendered/transferred. However, the rigid binary code of translation is fine-tuned with time- and space-sensitive programs. Counter-intuitively, translation's positive value of its code is what is commonly viewed as negative: a foreign novel cannot be made part of the system's cultural communication.

Such are the properties and principal characteristics of translation as system. In the second part, the functional place of translation in the overall social system will be considered at length. In the first part, translation has been viewed as a *system*; in the second, it will be presented as a *subsystem*.

# Part II
# Subsystem

# 6 Subsystem/System

> The idea of system has made it possible not only to account adequately for "known" phenomena, but also enabled the discovery of altogether "unknown" ones.
>
> —Itamar Even-Zohar

Translation's function in society becomes clearly definable only when translation is viewed on the proper scale. Translation can and should be analyzed as a system. Yet being an intrinsically social phenomenon, translation should be studied in its social context. Although translation, broadly theorized, may be found not only in social systems, but in all kinds of autopoietically functioning systems and, one may argue, beyond them, our focus in the present study is not that far-reaching. If translation is considered as a social phenomenon, it should be viewed on the scale of the entire society, in its interactions with other subsystems within the overall social system and in terms of the role it plays in the interaction of the overall system with the environment. A failure to expand our study of translation to the scope of the entire society, would inevitably lead to short-sightedness and even downright distortions of our description of its operations.

## 6.1. THE FORM 'SYSTEM/ENVIRONMENT'

In order to understand the position of translation in the social system, one has to re-enter the systems-theoretical fundamental form 'system/environment' into the overall social system. Autopoietic systems are operationally closed, but they cannot exist without an environment. They are not thermodynamically closed. Between the autopoietic system and its environment there is throughput (a combination of output with input). It is thanks to this throughput that autopoietic systems are systems which can combat entropy and build up anti- or neg-entropy: their interactional openness to the environment supplies them with necessary resources (energy, matter, information). Yet these supplies are made available at a price: the system has to constantly make sure that it is up to date with the environment. The system must closely watch the environment and re-adjust their relationship. But the question is bound to arise: How can the system keep pace with its environment if they are different by definition?

The same process can be observed within the system where subsystems have to coordinate their operations. But how can they do it if they all are

different and their communications are carried out using different media, forms, codes, programs, having different functions, efficacies?

Luhmann discusses several points where the system and its environment come together and are capable of overcoming their incompatibility (1997, 101 sq.). For example, language allows creating analogies in observations of phenomena by psychic and social systems which, in turn, allow structural couplings of the two types of systems. In this sense, language plays the role of the translator between the two systems being a *sine qua non* of their interaction and assuming a position at the boundary between them. Language transforms the parallel and simultaneous continuity of the two systems' functioning, having—without language—no points of intersection, into a discrete causality. This illustrates the role of translation, in this case exemplified by language, as an important constituent of intersystemic interaction and systemic structural couplings as well as its main functions. In this and in the next chapter, I will consider two aspects of translation's efficacy as social-systemic mediator both intra- and inter-systemically—translation's being a powerful social catalyst and its being the system's boundary phenomenon.

## 6.2. SOCIAL CATALYST

> If I had to pick any one word that to me most captures chemistry it would be the word *catalyst*.
>
> —Richard Zare

Translation is still largely viewed as a second-rate activity despite its ubiquity and importance for social life. This "general lack of consideration for their work" is one of the challenges of translators as professionals (Gouadec 2007, xiv). Translation, however, is indespensable for social interactions and is indeed omnipresent if we opt for a broader semiotic understanding of translation (cf. Jakobson 2000). At that, translation manifests systemic properties, although even within translation studies, the systemic properties of translation are doubted (Wolf 2007, 114–7). From the social-systemic viewpoint, translation may be seen as a social (sub)system within the overall social system, where the social system may stand for a nation-state or any other cultural-historic formation, or a civilization, or even a global system (Luhmann 1990, 178).

### 6.2.1. Elements and Relations in Social Systems

First, I will consider a metaphor used by Niklas Luhmann when he described different types of relations between elements of an autopoietic, self-(re)producing, system (1995, 23). The relations may be reciprocal, catalytic, or constraining. According to Luhmann, elements of the social

system are communications. Elements enter into relations with other elements and form structures. In the process of forming structures, with every new communication event of the unfolding communication process, elements become more and more constrained to connect selectively with some elements and not others. On the one hand, elements, thus, constitute a system by distinguishing themselves from alien elements, which constitute the environment; on the other hand, elements re-enter the system/environment distinction and constitute subsystems within the system.

(1) Certain communication events viewed as elements of a system can take place only provided other communication events also take place. These are bipartite relations. They are characterized by reciprocity and may be described as exchange because in the process of the two elements' interaction both change their state by going from their state, as it was prior to the interaction, to a new state resulting from the elements' mutual acting upon each other. For this type of interaction, there is no need in any third intermediary element.
(2) Another type of relations between elements is such that, for them to take place, they require a third element to be present. It is a type of conditioning, which Luhmann metaphorically terms catalytic, with one of the elements playing the part of a catalytic agent.
(3) Yet another type of relations is when certain conditionings of elements' relations become so successful that the conditionings turn into constraints in the sense that without them, however contingent they may be or seem to be, the established connection between the interacting elements cannot occur.

Types (2) and (3) may be considered as different degrees of the same kind of relationship. These are tripartite relations: A cannot enter the same relation with C that it can enter when B is present. As opposed to type (1), exchange, types (2) and (3) are mediation. Such mediation is made possible due to the presence of a catalytic agent (B).

The term 'mediation' is used in legal and political discourses, meaning activities of a third party arbitrating or moderating between two (usually conflicting) parties. This role of the mediating party is comparable to the role played by translation taking place between two communicating parties. Translation's mediation, however, is needed not necessarily under the circumstances of conflict, and even if occurring in a conflict, translation's mediation does not necessarily aim at harmonizing the interacting parties' relations, such harmonizing being rather an ethical facultative constituent.

### 6.2.2. Translation in Social Systems

In his theory, Luhmann described modern society as a function-based system, where function is a "focus of comparison" of multiple solutions to

a "reference problem" (2000a, 138). The reference problem marked for resolving is, however, never resolved; rather, it serves as a focus of comparison of different possible ways of dealing with it. As a result, a social subsystem emerges with the function to bring together and interlock different suggested solutions in a circular closure. The basis for distinguishing a function subsystem is its function with its particular reference problem, which cannot be tackled by any other subsystem within the overall social system. Based on this condition, translation may be considered as a social subsystem whose function is a specific type of mediation described in Part I. Indeed, only translation can translate. Neither politics, nor science, nor economy, nor law, nor religion, nor art can focus on the problem tackled by translation as mediation.

As a subsystem, translation occupies a somewhat peculiar place in the overall social system. In contrast to other, more "organized" subsystems (Simeoni 1998, 19), translation as a social mediator always seems to change its place, yet invariably taking the position *on the borderline of* interacting systems or subsystems. If a system interacts with another system in its environment, translation takes the position on the boundary of the system and its environment.

In this sense, translation translates on the boundary separating extra-translation spaces. What is meant here is not translators and their mobility—rather translation as a social subsystem. When it is said that translation changes its place in the system, it does not mean that translation physically shifts from one location to another, from one intersystemic border to another. Spatial terms are used metaphorically and should be understood as such. If a subsystem within the overall social system interacts with another subsystem, translation takes the position on the boundary between the two subsystems. Moreover, translation always picks up the medium (means of expression) of the interacting (sub)systems. Let us suppose that the legal function subsystem interacts with the political function subsystem. This interaction requires a conversion of the two systems' concepts and terminology into each other's 'language'. Yet neither can convert its or the other subsystem's language; therefore, the conversion is carried out by translation. At that, concepts are rendered by either legal or political 'vocabulary'. There is no such thing as translation's own 'language'. Even if we accept the notion *tertium comparationis* implied or explicit in certain translation theories, the *tertium comparationis* is not a language, rather it is the common extra-verbal ground, usually referred to as reality, for juxtaposing the 'vocabularies' of interacting parties. Therefore, translation cannot be said to occupy a third place; rather it takes the position on the boundary of the interacting subsystems and, like Proteus, changes, putting on the 'mask' of the subsystem into whose medium it renders the source text. Yet translation always clearly manifests its specific social function—a specific type of mediation occurring at the boundary of interacting (sub)systems.

### 6.2.3. Social Catalysis

How might the metaphor of catalysis be of help in theorizing translation's social function? The metaphorization of social communication through translation as catalysis is not a form of physicalism; rather, it is a heuristic device in order to look at the familiar phenomenon from a new angle. The implications associated with the source domain (catalysis) are projected upon the target domain (translation); thus, the implication complex of the target domain is enriched and its new facets may be discovered (Black 1979, 28–9, 39).

The notion 'catalysis' is borrowed from chemistry. Catalysis is "a process whereby a reaction occurs faster than the uncatalyzed reaction, the reaction being accelerated by the presence of a catalyst" (Bowker 1998, 3). Catalyst is defined as "a substance that increases the rate of approach to equilibrium of a chemical reaction without being substantially consumed in the reaction" (Gates 1992, 2).

Let us first establish the scale of observation. Luhmann defines catalytic conditioning of elements' relations as "the availability of specific elements, the presence of catalytic agents: for example, 'forms' in the sense employed by Marxist theory" (Luhmann 1995, 23). In Marxism, capitalism is theorized as the advancement of capital for generating profit through the purchase of commodities and their transformation into other commodities with a higher price, which yields a profit. The advancement is carried out in the form of money. Money, thus, can be interpreted as a catalytic agent between elements of the economic communication.

The same intra-subsystemic scale is used in Jürgen Habermas's description of modern society. Following Talcott Parsons with his concept of 'symbolically generalized media of communication', Habermas calls money a steering medium contributing to the formation of the economy subsystem in modern society (1984, 165). Money is a connection between autonomous organizations within one social subsystem, which steers a social intercourse.

When we turn to translation with its mediatory function, we step outside translation as a system because it mediates not between communication events within itself qua system but between communication events involving different subsystems of the overall social system or between the latter and the environment. This scale is inter-subsystemic and intra-systemic, when we consider mediation within one social system; the scale becomes inter-systemic, when we turn to mediation between the social system and its environment. For example, when the legal and political subsystems of the same overall social system interact, translation would mediate inter-subsystemically and, therefore, should be considered an inter-subsystemic and intra-systemic catalytic agent. When a social system interacts with its environment through mediation, then translation, functioning as mediator, becomes an intersystemic catalytic agent. Thus, the function of translation is to catalytically

optimize or increase the rate of approach to social equilibrium, understood as a more efficient and faster connection between interacting social entities. It is in this sense that the metaphor 'catalyst' to translation is applied here. In what follows, I will simplify the matter by considering both inter-subsystemic and inter-systemic relations as inter-systemic relations.

### 6.2.4. Translation as Catalyst

In chemistry, a catalyst is a body or a material inducing the phenomenon of catalysis and thereby enhancing the rate of the catalyzed reaction. The catalyst forms chemical bonds with reactants and, by doing this, facilitates their conversion into the end product. Although the catalyst is intimately involved in the reaction sequence, it is not consumed in the reaction and is regenerated at the end. Therefore, passing through the catalytic cycle, the catalyst does not appear in the overall stoichiometric equation.

When we consider how translation mediates between interacting parties, we observe the following similarities of its behavior with the behavior of the catalyst. A communication event (CE) involving translation may be referred to as a translational communication event (TCE). A communication event can be described as consisting of three parts (or selections)—utterance, information, and understanding. An utterance is to be interpreted. Interpretations search for the information core of the utterance. The utterance contains more than one piece of information and, therefore, the target party's selection of information is inevitably conjectural. The target party's information deduced from the source party's utterance may not be the same as the latter's intended information. The information selected by the target party constitutes understanding. The understanding completes the first stage of communication and at the same time serves as the basis for the second stage. At the second stage, the target party's understanding is fed into the communication in the form of an action qua response, and thereby it becomes the utterance whose information is searched by the other party. The source party turns into the target and vice versa. The communication process unfolds by going from one stage to another, from one conjecture to another, from a conjecture of one communicating party to a conjecture of the other party.

In Section 1.6.2, it was shown that TCE is even more complex in its structure. It includes three parties—not only the source and the target, but also the mediator (A → B → C). TCE also consists of two three-part communication events—$CE_1$ and $CE_2$: [A: $\text{Utterance}_1$ > $\text{Information}_1$ ≅ B: ($\text{Understanding}_1$ = $\text{Utterance}_2$) > $\text{Information}_2$ ≅ C: $\text{Understanding}_2$]. $CE_1$ is communication-wise 'defective' because Party B understands only in order to pass the obtained understanding to either Party A or C, depending in which direction communication unfolds. The communication unfolds between A and C, and the communication system is created (or reinforced) between A and C. Although B is involved in the communication process, it does not appear in the 'stoichiometric equation' of the communication. Having passed through

the communication and having increased its rate, the mediator (B), like a catalyst, is 'regenerated': its state and condition do not change in contrast to A's and C's state and condition. The A/C communication system evolves as if without B, which explains the seeming transparency of translation. Even if we say that B can also be affected by the communication that passed through it, the fact that what counts is the A/C relationship and not B's involvement, reminds us of the above-adduced definition of catalyst, which increases the rate of the reaction "without being substantially consumed" in the reaction. That is to say, although the catalyst may be influenced by the catalyzed reaction, it is not *substantially* affected by the reaction.

## 6.2.5. Properties of Catalysis

### *6.2.5.1. Ubiquity*

Starting his book on catalytic chemistry (1992), Bruce Gates first points out that most of the chemical reactions in industry and biology are catalytic. Michael Bowker confirms this by stating that approximately 90% of all chemicals and materials produced in the world today use catalysis (1998, 2). Catalysis is of ultimate importance especially in an age of growing concerns for the environment, such as ours. Yet "catalysis remains a neglected subject in chemical education" (Gates 1992, vii).

*Mutatis mutandis*, the same can be said about translation: despite its importance as a pivotal factor of international communication, it is very much neglected, not only in academia, but in other, more practically orientated domains. Translation is not infrequently relegated to second-rank activities. To give but one example, in the sociology of communication, verbal translation has come into the scope of consideration only recently with the so-called 'linguistic turn' and still is considered only tangentially. Renn (2006), Latour (1987), and Callon (1986a; 1986b; 1989) are exceptions in that they theorize the social domain by making *translation* their key notion, yet, as we saw in Sections 4.3.1 and 4.3.2, they do not take into consideration verbal translation, whereas in TS, translation is mostly understood as only verbum-centered and performed interlingually.

### *6.2.5.2. Expediting a Reaction*

A typical chemical reaction may be presented as two reactants A + B coming into contact and products C + D are obtained. All such reactions are equilibriums. Very often, however, when A and B are mixed, very little happens. Roald Hoffman describes the reason why nothing happens as follows:

> Reactants A and B are molecules made up of atoms bonded to each other in some special way. Products C and D are different molecules made up of the very same atoms. To get from A and B to C and D, chemical

> bonds must be broken and new ones formed. But it costs energy to loosen those old ties. [ . . . ] The result—a barrier. (1995, 180)

A catalyst X is applied. The catalyst initiates a reaction or a sequence of reactions. One of the reagents reacts with the catalyst X, producing an intermediate molecule AX. The intermediate molecule, then, reacts with the other reagent, B. This second step generates the products, C + D and reforms the catalyst: (1) A + X → AX; (2) AX + B → C + D (+ X). Thus, the overall reaction is A + B → C + D with X, coming to help the reaction and eventually going. X's function was to break the barrier between A and B.

Let us note that A and B are potentially able to contact. An ozone molecule ($O_3$) and an oxygen atom (O) form two oxygen molecules ($O_2$) in the atmosphere of our planet, and this is a process that goes on anyway; or a hamburger would be finally digested in our stomachs. But the depletion of ozone (causing damage to the ozone layer) without chlorine is very slow; for a hamburger to digest without a certain enzyme would take as much as seven years (Hoffman 1995, 181, 191).

If we apply the same principle to social communication, we will see that two parties speaking different languages may communicate (e.g., by gestures), but interlingual translation considerably facilitates the communication that is otherwise made difficult. The difficulty of the situation is comparable to a barrier between two chemical reactants. Translation helps overcome this barrier and expedite the communication.

#### *6.2.5.3. Surface Structure*

The nature of the interface of reactants and the catalyst is crucial for the efficiency of catalysis. The larger the surfaces of the catalyst and reactants are, the faster is the catalytic reaction. That is why certain catalysts are manufactured in the form of fine powder to increase their surface. Another crucial factor is composition and structure of the surfaces. The lower the coordination of atoms on the interacting surface, the better for catalysis.

Translation as a catalyst is 'porous' and with low coordination of 'atoms' in the sense that it is always ready to 'bond' with the environment. Hence, there are ideas about translation as a third place or translators as social nomads. The openness of translation is stimulated by this honest curiosity as to what is out there, beyond the boundary of the system, commissioning translation's activities. Translation is motivated to stay open by ethical, religious, or financial-social considerations (as a profession). In this, we see its place in the overall social system: translation is 'located' on a boundary phenomenon of the system. The function of the boundary is twofold—it not only separates system from environment; it also unites the system and its environment. The catalytic role of translation from the systemic standpoint is more often a manifestation of the uniting function—translation 'bonds' to phenomena of the environment quite easily, seeing that its principal responsibility is to

"increase the system's environmental sensitivity" (Luhmann 1995, 197). Whatever translation bonds to in the environment, it brings into the system for the latter's internal processing and checking, whether the environmental phenomenon is worth appropriating by the system. The famous adage *traduttore tradittore* which is usually understood as the translator not being faithful to his/her source-text can be understood in the social-systemic context as translation's always being unfaithful to its home system's identity. Translation always introduces otherness as sameness, alter as ego. Translation helps ego see alter as alter ego, that is to say, translation brings ego to understand, appreciate, or at least consider alter. To understand means to find something in common. In this sense, domesticating and foreignizing translations are two sides of the same coin in that they introduce the other as worth contemplating, understanding, and (possibly even) learning from. Invariably, contemplating, understanding the other leads to identifying and appreciating at least some sameness in the other's otherness. This sameness may provide the contemplating system with material for creating or reinforcing its own 'self' (cf. theatrical translation in Québec, see Brisset 1996). Contemplating the other may lead to an appreciation of the other—even in its otherness (cf. German cultural program of *Bildung* through foreignizing translations of Ancient Greek classics, see Berman 1992). As a result, translation catalytically unites system and environment despite the system's natural propensity to differentiate itself from its environment.

#### *6.2.5.4. Homogeneity and Heterogeneity of Catalysis*

Catalyses are divided into two categories depending on whether they consist of one or several phases. Hence, one distinguishes between *homogeneous* and *heterogeneous* catalyses, respectively. Applied to translation, one can also encounter translation processes of two types. Translation may be performed by one party participating in the communication event, or translation may be a collaboration, perhaps a relay. Examples from both history and from the present-day translation practice abound, yet collaborative aspects of translation are one of the understudied areas of research in translation studies.

As far as 'homogeneous social catalysis' is concerned, there is extensive literature. In this case, translation is mostly viewed as a one-person or one-text mediation. It has been so predominant in translation studies that one may call it the traditional approach. If the student has a translator/interpreter in mind, research is usually of the psychological nature—the goal is to penetrate the notorious 'black box'. Such approach to studying translation has become so deeply ingrained in translation studies that when research experiences this or that degree of sociological influence, even of such sociological models as the Luhmannian one, sharply separating sociology from psychology, the tendency is still to concentrate on the agents of translation process (Hermans 1997).

As to 'heterogeneous social catalysis', there are several issues of collaborative translation that are to be addressed. There is the fundamental question: To what extent is translation a collaborative process in itself (St. André 2010)? Translation process, however, also involves external activities, such as editing and approving printing or other types of social circulation; the research based on Bruno Latour's Actor-Network Theory seeks to bring this to light (Buzelin 2005; Chesterman in Duarte, Rosa, and Seruya 2006, 21–3).

#### *6.2.5.5. From Poisons to Constraints*

Catalysts differ in how they effect chemical reactions. Mostly catalysts are valued because they increase the rate of the reaction. This, however, is not always the case. Some catalysts, called inhibitors, slow down the reaction. There are inhibitors that compete with the reactants for bonding to the catalyst. Some inhibitors form such strong bonds that the reactants are virtually excluded from bonding with the catalyst. These inhibitors are called poisons (Gates 1992, 3).

Translation is usually viewed as positively influencing interaction between different social parties. This has been our stance in the preceding sections. Yet like catalysts, translation is not always positive. Translation may be 'too strongly bonded' to one of the interacting parties. In this sense, it may be indeed an inhibitor or even a poison. Mona Baker showed that benignly viewing translation only as a bridge between cultures and nations is naïve (2006). If we consider a less nocuous effect of translation upon social interaction, one can think of verbal translations, for example, that are found so unsatisfactory (according to whatever criteria) that they cause detriment to the unfolding interaction and thereby slow down or even block this interaction (for example, Brisset 2002).

On the positive side, however, translation may be such a vital link between the interacting parties, that it becomes a *conditio sine qua non* for the interaction. Under such circumstances, translation works as a constraint. In such situations, "even if [it is] introduced contingently, one cannot reject [it] without destroying what [it] makes possible" (Luhmann 1995, 23). Such is the role of translation when it becomes a means by which social systems radically renew their communicative paradigms (for example, Foz 1998; Tyulenev 2009).

Thus, we may conclude that the term *translation* should be understood as neutral as the term *catalyst*. Both can be pernicious or beneficial and in both these aspects manifest their properties in degrees; there may be (and often are) combinations of the two effects with various ratios of each. Translation studies can learn from chemistry, which is not gullible and wide-eyed as regards catalysts: chemists know only too well that "the catalyst X makes things happen that wouldn't have happened without it (not that we always want such changes; witness the ozone case)" (Hoffman 1995, 182).

### *6.2.5.6. Activity, Selectivity, Stability, Regenerability*

In view of the above-said, different aspects of the catalyst's performance need to be distinguished. The activity of a catalyst is the measure of how fast it works. Moreover, often during one reaction, products are formed in addition to those desired. The catalyst's performance may be described in terms of its activity for each particular product's formation. The ratio of these activities is the catalyst's selectivity. In other words, this is the "measure of the catalyst's ability to direct the conversion to the desired products" (Gates 1992, 4–5). While passing through the catalytic cycle, catalysts are involved in side reactions; this leads them to assuming inactive forms and disappearing from the catalysis. Thus, catalysts are described in terms of their stability: "the greater the stability, the lower the rate at which the catalyst loses its activity or selectivity or both" (ibid., 5). Deactivated catalysts may be, however, brought back into their active condition. Regenerability of the catalyst is the measure of how well its activity can be restored.

We have already discussed how effective and how efficient translation can be in its socio-catalytic role. This aspect of translation corresponds to catalysts' activity. Translation's activity varies from region to region and from one historic period to another. Thus, translation's activity may be viewed on different scales. Translation may be studied, for example, in terms of its activity throughout a particular nation-state's history. Such a study may, further, provide clues to translation's selectivity understood as translation's different degrees of activity under different social circumstances with different social structures. Large-scale observations of the dynamics of translation or a specific type of translation have been rare in translation studies, and even if attempted, they may fall short of their claims, this is only aggravated by misleadingly ambitious titles (see for example, Van Hoof 1991; Friedberg 1997). Apparently, translation studies has not reached the level of being capable of making such large-scale analysis of translation: we are still gathering our material and are not yet ready to attempt any viable generalizations. TS, however, attempts to adopt principles of describing large-scale phenomena from other humanities, such as history, sociology, and anthropology.

Selectivity as applied to translation may be described as translation's contribution to various social processes and subsystemic domains. For instance, translation's participation in literary processes has been studied relatively well. Polysystem theorists were even able to formulate laws of translation describing its contribution to literary systems depending on the latters' conditions (Even-Zohar 1990; Toury 1995). Baker (2006) provides numerous examples of political involvements of translation. Yet in order to discover new facets of translation's selectivity, TS may want to step beyond verbal translation into the sphere termed by Roman Jakobson intersemiotic translation (Jakobson 2000, 114). Obviously, without this, it would be impossible to study translation's catalytic involvements with different other social subsystems, such as the economy, art, religion, law, education,

and their different subdivisions. Only such studies will provide the necessary data for comparing translation's involvement with different social processes, i.e., its catalytic selectivity.

Selectivity of translation may be studied not only from the viewpoint of translation's involvement with different social domains. At each particular period of its history, a certain social system may select different systems in its environment. This system's selectivity will influence translation's selectivity—translations will be required from certain languages and not others, certain environmental phenomena will be transferred and not others. Obviously, within literary systems, genres will be another possible selectivity criterion. Any number of selectivity criteria may be thought of.

Without knowing translation's activity and selectivity, one can hardly study translation's stability over different historic periods and geographic regions as well as under different social circumstances. It would be impossible to answer questions such as: How stable is translation's role in society? At present, we may only dismiss the question by saying vaguely that translation plays an important role in society and cite anecdotal evidence. Obviously, unlike chemical catalysts, which are many and which are chosen on the basis for their stability, traditionally we consider translation as our only 'catalyst'. In this sense, translation is indiscriminately described in its totality. But how justifiable is such an approach? We know that translation is practiced differently over space and time. Perhaps, instead of lumping all translation together, we should discuss translation as separate types and study these different types' activity, selectivity, and stability? So far, only translation (written form) and interpretation (oral form) are regarded as more or less clearly separate types; to a lesser degree, we also differentiate between intra- and interlingual translation and intersemiotic translation (albeit this does not mean that we are ready to consider them as equals, interlingual translation taking, in fact, the lion's share of research efforts).

As an example, I will touch upon the difference between the subdivision of translation into its written and oral forms. The following questions may be asked: Whose activity of the two—translation or interpretation—is greater in the social domain and/or in which of the latter's subdivisions? Interpretation may be said to have a more immediate impact on social processes due to its nature with all advantages and disadvantages leading to positive and negative effects. Interpretation's selectivity is clear when we consider its role in politics, business, law; but it has much less influence on the literary social subsystem. Written translation's selectivity would be quite different. The difference in terms of stability between the written and oral translation may be illustrated by the following situation. When certain nations do not interact directly, for example, being at conflict, written translation shows greater stability than interpretation: if there is little direct communication, interpretation is hardly functioning as a social catalyst; yet written documents or literary works still may be translated, sometimes even more actively (it is important to know one's enemy), thus even

under hostile circumstances written translation is stable as a catalyst (not necessarily contributing to the restoration of peace between the conflicting nations, though).

The last aspect I will discuss in this section is translation's regenerability. Large-scale historical observations may help us see what conditions the rises and falls of translation over the course of history. At some times, with some nations, translation seems to almost fall into disuse: it becomes comparable to a deactivated catalyst incapable of functioning. At some other times, on the contrary, translation resurges and truly regenerates; at such times, we observe what Hoffman described as "the miracle of consumption and regeneration, of Persephone and the Resurrection" (1995, 179). In translation studies, we are still not clear what exactly causes such regenerations. Sometimes, it seems that political events determine fluctuations of translation's lifecycle: sometimes, even the highest royal personae start translating (like Catherine the Great in eighteenth-century Russia). Yet this is not the only reason. Apparently other 'treatments', such as rejuvenation of literary pursuits of the system after a period of stagnation, resuscitate translation and bring back its lost catalytic activity. The question may also be asked: Can translation regenerate itself or is it impossible and, in order to regenerate, does it always need a 'treatment' by some other social structure?

Obviously, there are more aspects of translation as a social catalyst to discuss. The metaphorization of translation as catalyst and of translational communication event as catalysis helps to bring into a focus otherwise scattered aspects of the social-systemic role of translation. Taking the cue from Luhmann's social systems theory, we are able to see *what* translation is as a social catalyst, what its social-systemic properties are, and *how* it catalyzes social interaction.

# 7 A Boundary Phenomenon

> Our border! [ . . . ] Never before had I seen a foreign country. For me a frontier was something mysterious. Ever since my childhood travels had been my favourite dream. [ . . . ] I cheerfully rode into the cherished river and my good horse brought me out onto the Turkish bank. But the bank had already been conquered. I was still in Russia.
>
> —Aleksandr Pushkin[1]

## 7.1. MEMBRANES, SKINS, WALLS AND DOORS, BUT NOT ONLY

Social intersystemic interaction is carried out through a range of contacts—military, diplomatic, trade, or cultural relations. All of them, to this or that extent, at this or that point, involve translation as a mediatory mechanism which allows the target system to make sense of what is offered by the party interacting with it. It is crucial, therefore, to 'locate' translation in society and study in detail its role of a boundary phenomenon. In order to do this, we should pay more attention to the systemic boundary.

The concept of self-referential, operational closure requires a modification of the notion of the systemic boundary (Luhmann 1997, 75–8). Living systems have spatial boundaries, i.e., specific organs, such as cells, skin, responsible for protecting (closing) the system and the latter's selective exchange with (opening to) the environment. However, this kind of spatial boundaries is not the only type of boundary that is found in systems. Social systems are not necessarily bounded in space: boundaries "separate communication from all noncommunicative events and states of affairs, and thus cannot be fixed as territories or groups of persons" (Luhmann 1995, 410). Geo-political boundaries are only one kind of social boundary. This has become abundantly clear with the invention of print and telecommunication which re-negotiated social space. The non-spatial types of boundary are produced and reproduced in each particular communication event. This means that communication identifies itself as a certain type of communication with a network of operations according to the criteria, specific to this particular system. In other words, each operation contributes to the continuous (self-) differentiation of the system from the environment. The boundary of the system is nothing else but a type of operations which make the system what it is. The system constitutes its boundary with/in every operation.

Boundary has the twofold function of opening and closing the system, separating the system from and connecting it with its environment. How it is possible becomes clear when we take into consideration the distinction between element and relation. The boundary between a system and its environment makes it necessary to attribute every element to either the

system or to the environment. Relations, however, can penetrate the boundary between the system and its environment. "[The boundary] separates events, but lets causal effects pass through" (Luhmann 1995, 29).

Systemic boundaries function on the basis of the system's eigen-selectivity, i.e., the operational selectivity of this particular system. Such eigen-selectivity reduces both the external and internal complexity of the system. No contact, therefore, can carry through boundaries the full complexity. This leads to the indeterminability and opaqueness of systems for one another.

One may find it puzzling if the boundary should be considered as belonging to the system or to its environment. There have been attempts in systems studies to theorize system, environment and the boundary between them as a triad (Luhmann 1995, 504, endnote 49). Luhmann puts forward the following counter-argument:

> If one includes the problem of the difference in degree of complexity as an aid to interpretation, then one can relate boundaries to the function of stabilizing this difference in degree, for which only the system, not the environment, can develop strategies. Viewed from the system's perspective, they are "self-generated boundaries"—membranes, skins, walls and doors, boundary posts and points of contact. (Luhmann 1995, 29)

In Section 7.2, I will touch upon the problem of theorizing translation as a third space, which echoes the problem of the systemic boundary, with my reasoning against such conceptualization of translation.

Drawing a boundary between itself and its environment is vital for the system in order to differentiate itself. An adequately determined boundary allows the system to attribute events as belonging to the inside or outside of the boundary by using its own means. This is what governs observation of the first order. In modern society, until it is made clear what mediatory operations are to be qualified as translations, translation cannot be practiced.

The formation of the system's boundary interrupts the continuity of the connecting processes between the system and its environment. The performance of the system's boundary can be intensified in how strictly the system disconnects itself from the environment. The system can regulate the degree of the discontinuities. Hence, the systemic boundary acquires its dynamics over time and space.

The notion of boundary can be reformulated with the help of the difference between the self- and other-references (*Selbstreferenz und Fremdreferenz*, the latter being also translated into English as *hetero-reference*). Social systems are a type of autopoietic system which operates in the medium of meaning, that is, they always deal with a range of options out of which they select what fits in with their communication, while putting aside or rejecting all the rest. In other words, the systems operating in the medium of meaning reproduce themselves by continuously distinguishing between

self- and other-references. The boundary always implies the other side; in the medium of meaning, there are always two-sided forms (something selected and something otherwise possible). The other-reference is always there in all searches for acceptable linkages in the network of communication. The systemic boundary is, therefore, nothing else but the self-reproduced difference of self- and other-reference and, as such, the boundary is always present in communication. Translation being a specifically boundary-crossing social agent, or rather, a social agent whose function is to help the inner communication benefit from the system/environment interaction, is also *omni*present in communication-based systems.

Crossing boundaries means entering a different operational space. Not all social subsystems can cross the boundary. Some of subsystems are internally directed; others function specifically as the 'organs' by means of which the system can keep an eye on its outside, its environment. One may say that the latter subsystems are capable of crossing the operational boundary—without, however, losing the capacity to view other types of operations through the prism of the operations of their home system. One can compare them with feelers of some living organisms. Translation is one of such boundary-crossing subsystems. Yet no matter how far into the environment the feelers may be protruded, they never stop being part and parcel of the organism to whom they belong. The same may be said about translation. Translation never acts on its own; it is always operationally engaged with its overall system. The translator may be a traitor, but the translator cannot operate in a way that would make it impossible to understand whether s/he is a traitor or not. To be qualified as a traitor presupposes self- or other-referentiality, and in this sense the translator is always a 'feeler' of some social system. Even if the translator translates on his/her initiative, s/he represents some social system, into which s/he is socialized and to whose communication in the form of traditions, logic, culture, etc., his/her translational decision and behavior can be traced.

## 7.2. TERTIUM NON DATUR

In Part I, I discussed mediation as the principal social function of translation. Mediation always takes place *between*: between two (or more) parties, between system and environment, etc. Yet one should be careful not to ascribe too much freedom to translation as a mediating agent in the social context. The mediation by translation fulfils the two main functions of the systemic boundary in that translation opens and closes the social system in the latter's dealings with the environment. In so doing, translation inevitably expresses the eigen-selectivity of the system for which it translates. Practically, the translator/interpreter does not express his/her own opinion about what is being mediated through him/her—at least, not in the capacity of translator/interpreter. The most radical approaches to translation,

such as hijacking the original (Flotow 1991, 80) or appropriating the original (Brisset 1996), should be interpreted as cases when the agency of translation is, for example, mixed the agency of politics, and the latter causes the translating system to radicalize its eigen-selectivity.

Translation as a mediator, located on the boundary between the system and its environment, must necessarily choose the type of operations of either the system or the environment (depending on what the commissioner requires). Translation cannot be located between the interacting system and environment in such a way that it would become an independent third party. In the interaction of the system and its environment, *tertium* is *non datur*—every communication event is made either part of the system or of its environment. If translation is viewed as located between the interacting system and environment, then its operations must be viewed as external by the system and, therefore, its operations must belong to the environment from the viewpoint of the system because the system distinguishes between everything as either operating on its own terms or on some extraneous terms, that is, on the terms of the environment. Cases are known when in international conflicts, propagandistic materials were translated into the language of System A on the initiative of System B, representing the environment of System A. In such cases, translation should assume the type of communication and its characteristics which would be viewed by System A as its own. Thus translation, even if it is commissioned by the environment, operates on the terms of the system *into* which it mediates. Translation is always part of either the system or its environment, but never a third party.

## 7.3. OR, PERHAPS, DATUR?

In the previous section, it was categorically stated that the third is not given, that translation is not a 'third space'. And yet it seems that the nail has still not been hit on the head. To further clarify the issue, I will turn to George Spencer Brown's calculus of indications (1973) and Francisco J. Varela's extended calculus of indications (1979, 106–207).

These two calculi, where the former constitutes the basis of the latter prompted by Varela's interest primarily in biological autopoietic systems, attempts to formalize intuitive logic of the broadest application. In Spencer Brown's words:

> The theme of this book [*Laws of Form*] is that a universe comes into being when a space is severed or taken apart. [ . . . ] So does the circumference of a circle in a plane. By tracing the way we represent such a severance, we can begin to reconstruct, with an accuracy and coverage that appear almost uncanny, the basic forms underlying linguistic, mathematical, physical, and biological science, and can begin to see

> how the familiar laws of our own experience follow from the original act of severance. (1973, v)

Varela adds that it is "a nondualistic attempt to set foundations for mathematics and descriptions in general, in the sense that subject and object are interlocked. From this basic intuition, [Spencer Brown] builds an explicit representation and a calculus for distinctions" (1979, 110).

### 7.3.1. Chinese Boxes or Matryoshka Dolls

Spencer Brown's lucid genesis captures the most basic substance of all distinctions—form. Bertrand Russell, Spencer Brown's teacher, defined the form of a proposition as "that, in it, that remains unchanged when every constituent of the proposition is replaced by another" (qtd. in Varela 1979, 109). Spencer Brown explains further:

> Although all forms, and thus all universes, are possible, and any particular form is mutable, it becomes evident that the laws relating such forms are the same in any universe. (1973, v)

Spencer Brown and Varela go to the bottom of things and consider distinctions in their fundamental sense in which all of them are alike and all domains, where distinctions are made, are alike as well: "We erase every qualitative difference of the criteria of distinctions, and simply reduce them to their essential quality: generating a boundary in whatever domain" (Varela 1979, 110).

Let us pause here and appreciate this moment—importantly for us, generating a boundary is the very genesis of translation. Indeed, the first act of creation is drawing a distinction (Spencer Brown 1973, 1–7). The space is severed or cloven by a distinction: ⌐. The parts of the severed or cleft space, represented by the inside and outside of the angle—termed 'cross', are sides (spaces, states, contents) of the distinction. The act of creation, or severance of the hitherto form-less space by a boundary, is prompted by an intent. The boundary creates a state distinguished by a distinction—the marked state (as opposed to the other side—the unmarked state). The two states of the form are in perfect continence. The marked state is given a *name*. At first sight, it may seem that this has nothing to do with translation, it is just a name-giving. But in the calculus of distinctions, the boundary is termed 'cross' for a reason: cross implies an instruction to cross the boundary. When there is a naming, there is an implication of the possibility of translation. The marked state, in order to account for its being marked and named, has to explore (or at least cast a glance at) the unmarked state and compare itself with the unmarked, that is, to copy the existing form into the marked (concave) side of the form. This sets the crossing of the boundary in motion. This is where static scholarly approaches fail. As far as natural

autopoietic systems and the world around them are concerned, when there are always two sides of the form, there is always the need of continuous (re-)crossing.

The exploration of the outside enlightens the marked state in that the unmarked state becomes known to it. The two spaces develop a relationship. Since the marked and unmarked are in perfect continence, their relationship can be presented as the equation: $m = n$, where $m$ is the marked state and $n$ is the unmarked. The boundary separating the sides of the initial form of the distinction precludes reaching a point on one side from the other side without crossing the boundary. In the previous section, we have seen that autopoietic systems develop mechanisms for reaching out into their environment (beyond their boundary). Translation is one such mechanism, in the context of the relationship of perfect continence between the sides of the form:

$$_{S}\urcorner E.$$

Here, *S* stands for the system and E is the environment. Translation re-enters the relationship of the entire form into the marked state, yet claiming to have preserved the continence of the form ($m = n$). Whatever its tactics or strategy, translation always manifests a degree of consideration of its original or at least claims to do so. That is why it may be said to operate in the form of referencing itself to a source. This source is transformed, yet even if the transformation is the most radical, such as $0 \rightarrow 1$ (in the case of quasi-translations), a reference is still provided. In this case, the paradox $0 = 1$ is made possible. Such paradox aside, the equation is accomplished by trans-formation ('trans-', *across* + 'form'): intralingually, in the constructions such as " . . . I mean: . . . ", which is tantamount to '='; interlingually, A = B, where A and B are expressions of different languages; or intersemiotically, $\nabla = \Diamond$, where $\nabla$ and $\Diamond$ stand for expressions of different semiotic systems. The equalization of the expressions of the opposite sides of the form by translation is accomplished through a range of transformation techniques described in axioms, canons, theorems, and consequences of Spencer Brown's calculus (1973, 136–8)—from cancellation through reorganization to condensation of elements of translated phenomena (conducted latently in the mind of one particular translator or patently in a series of translations of one and the same original). Being a boundary phenomenon, translation may be described in terms of what Spencer Brown writes about crosses. Translation creates continence, for unless one space is cleft, it is not continence, but ignorance, blindness, and autism. Yet for the discussion at hand, translation is said to operate in the form of equation.

Naming "call so-and-so such-and-such" (which is the drawing of distinction described above) may go in both directions: "call such-and-such so-and-so." Naming, therefore, may be said to be without direction or pan-directional. Yet instructions to cross the boundary are always directional, for it demands a crossing to the other side of the form (Spencer Brown 1973, 80).

The above said shows that translation cannot be outside of the equation (continence) of the form. Hence, it cannot be a third side, for there is no third side. Yet there is still a doubt caused by the active role translation plays in the interaction between the two sides of the form, so active that translation appears to be a third side of the form. Why so? To understand this better, we now turn to Varela's extended calculus of distinctions. The applicability of his calculus to translation is substantiated by the life-like model of social autopoietic systems. The key concept in order to understand the difference between static crosses and crosses in natural autopoietic systems is re-entry. I hinted above that natural autopoietic systems have to re-enter their difference from the environment not just once, as static forms do, but constantly because they have to reconstitute themselves with/in every operation and also because their environment constantly changes. Varela compared static crosses, if presented geometrically, to Chinese boxes (or I would compare them with Russian matryoshka dolls, hence the title of Section 7.3.1 dealing with static crosses). Yet natural autopoietic systems contain constantly occurring "bootstrapping" processes with indefinite recursion of their elements. This is the endless process of re-entry that in-forms forms. As a geometrical analogy of dynamic crosses, Varela suggests Klein bottles.

(In parentheses, I would like to note that Varela's comparisons are a kind of translation no less than his recapitulation of Spencer Brown's *Laws of Form* or Spencer Brown's own interpretation of his calculus for logic, when he "translates," in his own words, statements of logic in terms of his calculus—1973, Appendix 2, specifically p. 124. Luhmann presents his translation strategy when he writes that in his social theory he demonstrates its content by producing necessary redundancies and devising roundabout ways—1997, 63.)

### 7.3.2. Klein Bottles Full of Re-entries, or Trinities

> Form [ist] *entfaltete Selbstreferenz*, und zwar *zeitlich* entfaltete Selbstreferenz.
>
> —Niklas Luhmann

In this section, we will look into the phenomenon of re-entry in order to resolve the conundrum of translation, seeming to be a third space, and also in order to learn more about its nature. Let us take the form shown in Figure 7.1.

It is a form with a re-entry. Translation re-enters the form 'system/environment' into the inside of the form 'system/environment'. Yet a paradox may be noticed: at one point, S is S, yet at another point it turns out to be E. Thus, S appears to be both S and E, a cross and a non-cross. This paradox may be explained only if the calculus introduces the complementarity

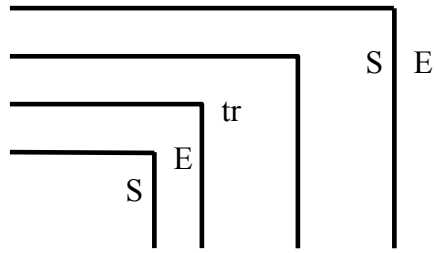



*Figure 7.1* Re-entry of the system/environment form.
*Legend:* E, S, tr stand for Environment, System, and translation, respectively.

'pattern/dynamic' or 'space/time'. Varela acknowledges Spencer Brown's introduction of time to account for the alternation of the two states of the form in the re-entry as his most outstanding contribution, because this allows us to link time and description in the most natural way. Building on Spencer Brown's calculus, Varela creates his own extended calculus with a third value allowed (in addition to the two sides of the form—marked and unmarked). Self-reference, time and re-entry are viewed as aspects of the third value in the form of distinction of natural autopoietic systems. Re-entry is interpreted as an alternation of the other two values in time (Varela 1979, 138–9).

With time added into the equation, a wave-like presentation of re-entry does greater justice to this phenomenon of the form. Crosses alternate with non-crosses or system (S) with the environment (E):

$$\ldots\urcorner\rightarrow\ \rightarrow\urcorner\rightarrow\ \rightarrow\urcorner\rightarrow\ \rightarrow\urcorner\ \ldots$$

or

$$\ldots\ \rightarrow\urcorner\rightarrow\ \rightarrow\urcorner\rightarrow\ \rightarrow\urcorner\rightarrow\ \ldots$$

or

$$\ldots \mathrm{S} \rightarrow \mathrm{E} \rightarrow \mathrm{S} \rightarrow \mathrm{E} \rightarrow \mathrm{S}_{\ldots}$$

or

$$\ldots \mathrm{E} \rightarrow \mathrm{S} \rightarrow \mathrm{E} \rightarrow \mathrm{S} \rightarrow \mathrm{E}_{\ldots}$$

*Figure 7.2* Waves I.

*Figure 7.3* Waves II.

Hence, one can represent this as waves (see Figures 7.2 and 7.3).

Let us note that these wave-like oscillations are created by translation because re-entry causes the oscillations and re-entry itself is made possible through translation. The fixed points, poles, in the drawings above are the spatial view of the oscillation, while pattern sequences represent the temporal aspect. Every re-entry creates oscillations, this is why, as we will see in Chapter 8, translation is the source of variation in the social system's evolution. Translation as re-entry may be interpreted as the locus and mechanism where system re-enters its own opposition with environment (the form 'system/environment' into itself). In other words, translation is a re-entrant which can be interpreted as an alternation of the two values of form in time. In this case, translation can be viewed as the zone where the alternation of the system's elements with the environment's elements takes place:

$$(1)\ \mathrm{Tr} = t(\mathrm{S} \leftrightarrow \mathrm{E}),$$

where $t$ is time. Importantly, it should be understood that the unit of the re-entry includes both S and E alternating over time, with the resultant unitarianness created, as stated by Hans Jenny:

> The three fields—the periodic as the fundamental field with the two poles of figure and dynamics invariably appear as one. They are inconceivable without each other . . . nothing can be abstracted without the whole ceasing to exist. We cannot therefore label them one, two, three, but can only say that they are three-fold in appearance and yet unitary. (qtd. in Varela 1979, 125–6)

Yet another dimension of translation's invisibility and the communication's unitarianness is as follows. Today's globalizing modernity with its acceleration of time when people "can view and evaluate different cultures at the flick of a switch, or via high speed (or almost instantaneous) transport," contributes to translation's being made invisible because of the high speed of communication (Bielsa 2005, 135).

The communicative unitarianness of translation as re-entrant may create an illusion of translation being different and separate from the form. Yet it should be remembered that re-entry is the life-pulse of the form and is governed by the desire to distinguish: "[g]ranted this desire, we cannot escape the form" (Spencer Brown 1973, 69). Thus, translation is nothing else but the form itself in action, so to speak.

We may interpret the two states of the form 'system/environment' as timeless constituents of the re-entry which occur as an oscillation in time:

$$(2)\ \mathrm{Tr}(\mathrm{S} \leftrightarrow \mathrm{E}) \approx t.$$

Once again, translation is shown as a unit of the two constituents of the form re-in-formed, occurring as an oscillation in time. Yet now translation is not the locus but the oscillation itself. Although both interpretations show the significant characteristic of translation as re-entry (which, by the way, in a different way proves that translation may be regarded as a systemic formation in its own right, cf. the earlier discussion of translation as a system, Section 1.6), they both show that no other elements, except the two sides of the form, participate in translation's operation as re-entry. Hence, there is no ground for considering translation anything other than a particular kind of the representation of the form—translation is not a third space, rather it is a zone or mechanism of the two form values' oscillation.

Whichever way of interpreting translation's role in the oscillation we prefer, time figures as an important factor and is linked to translation. What is also important is that the oscillations of the system's and the environment's elements in translation may be of different temporal lengths: the '↔' in formulas (1) and (2) gains dynamics only thanks to the introduction of *t* and may be of unequal distribution of oscillation periods. The spatial representation of translation may demonstrate different combinations of how long the oscillation lingers at either of the poles, for example, as shown in Figure 7.4.

The dynamic can be different. Any translation (text or process) may be shown to be an oscillation between the system's elements and the

*Figure 7.4* Waves III.

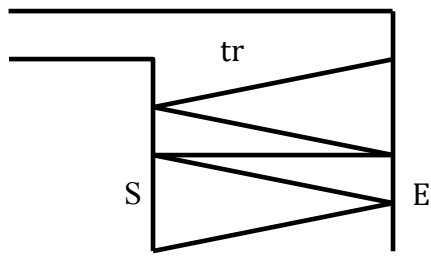



*Figure 7.5* Translation as an oscillation of system and environment elements.
*Legend:* S, E, and tr stand for System, Environment, and translation, respectively.

environment's elements: S ↔ E—or, in traditional terms, of the source language/text and the target language/text. Figure 7.5 shows this translation.

The dynamic of oscillation is hardly ever internally regular. Yet texts of translation may manifest a penchant for the S or E polarity (predominance of the system's or the environment's elements). If S elements dominate in the text/process of translation, then we usually speak of a domesticating, invisible, free, etc., translation; if E elements draw oscillations to themselves more often, then we tend to call it foreignizing, visible, literal, etc. What is obvious, however, from what has been shown is that translation is always a combination of S and E elements oscillating with a particular dynamic over time (whether understood as real timeline or as a metaphorical presentation of space, as is the case in a written text of translation). For a translation to be really foreignizing, it should not translate at all, but that would contradict the basic and universal logic of re-entry—that would be tantamount to an empty passive gaze at the other side.

To summarize, Spencer Brown's calculus, developed by Varela, helped us see translation in a most generalized way when translation types are stripped of their particularities and are considered as belonging to the same class of phenomena. This is how formalization helps homogenize the otherwise overwhelmingly heterogenized domain of translation. We saw that translation is a type of systemic re-entry, or, in this sense, translation is an embodiment of self-referentiality (through other-referentiality) of the system. The bootstrapping motion of re-entries starts with drawing a cross, or a boundary, because naming requires checking value. The checking is possible only against the background of the other side of the form.

We saw the eigen-behavior (self-determined behavior) of translation which has its own fixed points, or states (Varela 1979, 171). Fixed points are self-referential or recursive: they tell us about themselves that they are invariant. Fixed points are uniquely characterized vis-à-vis all other values of operations. Fixed points can be expressed through indefinite iterations of the operations to which they belong. Varela suggests using fixed points as the basis for law formulation more widely than it has been done so far:

> [I]nvariant transformations and fixed-point topological properties of differential dynamics are a royal road to representations of physical laws. However, these tools have been mostly concerned with numerical and differentiable representations, and there has been little development of the corresponding notions for non-numerical and informational processes. (Varela 1979, 174)

We saw at least some generalized fixed points of translation as a type of operations in social systemics. In order to see them, we applied the calculi of form elaborated by Spencer Brown and Varela. The degree of generalization is very high and may be seen as impractical, yet as Luhmann put it:

> This is a totally new, fascinating intellectual development, which, for the first time, enables us to overcome the old confrontation of the natural or hard sciences and the humanities or law- and text-based (hermeneutic) domains. (1997, 60)

Arguably, it is possible to apply some of scientific concepts to translation studies in order to explain known or discover new facets of translation, viewed both from theoretical and practical points of view.

# 8 Translation in System's Evolution

Translation's functioning as re-entry is not a mechanic flip-flop of the system/environment oscillation, but rather like a bootstrapping movement. Each new re-entry propels the system and the environment on and prompts their evolution. The concept of evolution, however, may be said to be a stumbling block for certain paradigms, such as functionalism in sociology, because if the social system has all the functions necessary for its existence in place, why would it evolve, i.e., leave its well-functioning condition in order to try to reach some other condition which may or may not prove to be as functionally efficient? In other words, why would a functionally well-balanced and viable system leave its functional 'bliss' of equilibrium and quest for something different? The key question bound to arise is: What is the propelling power behind the system's evolution? As in the case of organisms, the classical theory of systemic evolution sees variation as a result of the endogenous causes (mutation) and selection as the need to adapt to the outside world, which is imposed by this world on the organism. Within the autopoietic turn (Knodt 1995, xx–iv), the systems theory asserts that autopoietic, self-referential systems are irritated by their environment, yet still retain a sizable degree of independence in that they cannot be forced to adapt to the world. Indeed, any existing system is already adapted well enough to be able to exist. There is no such thing as a better or worse adaptation: when adapted enough to exist, the organism is sufficiently—fully—adapted. Yet this full adaptation does not mean that there is full correspondence between the complexity of the environment and the complexity of the system: the latter always reduces the complexity of the former. This gap between the system and its environment (and not adaptation) is suggested in the systems theory to be the decisive factor of systemic evolution. That explains the existence of organisms which remain unchanged over the course of natural history. They can afford their stability thanks to their autopoiesis. Environment is a pre-condition of the continuity of the system's existence, but it can become incompatible with the autopoiesis of the system and then the system ceases to exist. Thus, the drive for variation in the social system should be explained by irritations of the environment—not by the instability of the system. The system reacts

to the irritations only based on what it can do within its autopoiesis. The system chooses to which of the irritations it would react and change its existing structures accordingly and which it will ignore.

As for social systems, the language coding, which we discussed in Chapter 5, the Muse of all things social, is an indispensable factor of social evolution (Luhmann 1997, 225). The 'yes/no'-based handling of operations and of the reproduction of meaning always exposes the system to its environment, and the gap between the two, which is postulated as the decisive factor of evolution, is always an abyss on the edge of which the system finds itself. Because of this precarious position, the system's reproduction of meaning cannot go too smoothly, and errors occur which require correction (Luhmann 1995, 445). This opens a way to social evolution, which is always an abnormal reproduction (Luhmann 2004, 251). Meaning as "a surplus of references to other possibilities of experience and action" (Luhmann 1995, 60), with concomitant abnormal reproduction versions, is reproduced as the difference between the actual meaning option (the present selection) and the horizon (all other possibilities for selection). The gap between social systems and their environments is widened because the differences between the actual meaning and the horizon cut across three dimensions: (1) the fact dimension (where forms and systems of the internal and external horizons meet; put simply, this is the dimension of themes of meaningful communication: 'this' vs. 'something else'); (2) the temporal dimension (where the present meets with the past and future); (3) the social dimension (where ego meets alter, the self meets the other) (Luhmann 2004, 252; 1995, 76–82). Such multi-layered differentiation makes it more problematic to reproduce without a failure or a variation.

Luhmann theorizes evolution of the system as a process comprised of three stages: (1) variation, (2) selection, and (3) stabilization. These stages are viewed in their circularity, rather than as a linear causality. The possibility to vary requires established mechanisms of selection and stabilization. That means that evolution unfolds within the system which, having received an irritation from the environment, selects and, based on the selection, stabilizes its internal communication. Since the focus of present discussion is the changes incurred in the system during its evolution, I will not consider the other option the system has, that is, to ignore the irritation.

In this chapter, the goal is to consider the role of translation in social-systemic evolution. It appears that translation plays a crucial role at the first stage of every evolutionary step of the social system. Indeed translation provides options for the variation stage. Actually, all the multitude of options, suggested by translation, boils down to a limited set:

- A = A (e.g., direct borrowing from the source without changing semiotic signs). Such direct borrowings can be found in macaronic types of literary texts, aimed at bilingual readerships. Greek, Latin terms or locutions as well as expressions borrowed wholesale from other

languages and transferred unchanged into a text are examples of translating A as A: A = A. One may say that scientific symbols, when they are transferred from a text in one language into a text (translation) in another language, are examples of the 'A = A' type of translation. In fine arts, we can find plenty of this type of translations: for instance, when Dmitrii Shostakovich quotes Rossini or his own music (in his Fifteenth Symphony), he translates A as A.

- A = $A_1$ (e.g., transliteration: Александр Скрябин = Aleksandr Skriabin).
- A = B (e.g., translation with a target language 'equivalent': погода = weather).
- A = '$A_1$, or B' (e.g., glossing with synonyms for a source text element: перестройка = 'perestroika, or re-building').
- A = $A_1$/B (e.g., lexical or syntactic hybrids: the English word *oddments*, where the Germanic root *odd* was joined with the Latin suffix *-ment*).

Translation's role at the stage of selection considerably diminishes because the system has the final say as to which of the options is/are suggested to be accepted and made part of the system's communication. When the system adopts a newly selected phenomenon, provided by translation from the system's environment, translation is largely inert. Its function is to look on the outside for new options for further variations.

## 8.1. LOSING PARADISE

The systems theory sees the reason for evolution not as something exogenous and the selection process not as choosing a certain quality or characteristic imposed on the organism by its environment. The systems theory agrees that the environment irritates the autopoietic system, but the latter cannot be forced to adopt what the environment suggests. Its internal structures make the system indifferent or sensitive to the environment. If the system is sensitive, it develops a capacity to change its structures and thereby evolve.

The first stage of this process is variation, which is a deviation from existing structures as in the case of what appears to be unsuccessful communication—for the observer such deviation looks like an internal failure or a problem in the relationship of the system and the environment. The system may react to the disruption by re-negotiating its internal characteristics.

Re-entry is of key importance for understanding the role of translation in social-systemic evolution. Reproduction is based on constant re-entries of the 'system/environment' difference into the system, which motivates the system to evolve (Luhmann 2004, 257). Meaning is unstable and penetrable, and the difference, which is at the basis of meaning, always points both to the system and to its environment. As we have seen, translation is

directly involved in re-entries and functions in the medium of meaning. That is why translation is a factor inducing the stage of variation of the system's evolution. There is constant instability in the relations of the system and its environment because they do not connect in each aspect or point. The totality of the environment's complexity would overwhelm the system; hence, the system always reduces the environment's complexity. This gap between the complexity of the environment and the complexity of the system creates instability in their relationship. This instability is the source of irritations. Translation is a mechanism of making the system aware of its incongruities with the environment. The system can either develop a higher level of indifference, thereby rejecting translation's prompts, or it can embark on a new evolutionary cycle, by accepting what is brought from outside and by varying its structures.

Let us look at an example. Karen Reitz analyzed the development of analytical constructions in Russian language of mathematics from the eighteenth to the early twentieth century (Reitz 1990). She analyzed both original mathematical publications and translations into Russian and compared the two types of publications. This provides a glimpse into the contribution translation made to the process of development of the language of Russian mathematics in the period of Westernization initiated by Peter the Great's radical social and political reforms in early eighteenth-century Russia.

Actually, Reitz considered two full centuries—the eighteenth and nineteenth—and divided them into the following periods: (1) the period 1725, the year after the establishment of the Russian Academy of Sciences, until (2) 1820, when the great Russian mathematician, Nikolai Lobachevskii (1792–1856), started his career; (3) the period after the Socialist Revolution (1917), the 1920s. Reitz also compared the period 1725–1820 with the period preceding it, which helped appreciate the importance of innovations and dynamics of the development of mathematics in Russia after the Russian academics started to write their own books and translate (or commission translations). It would suffice for the present discussion to focus on the most radical part of the evolution, studied by Reitz—on the eighteenth century.

First mathematical publications in Russian appeared in the late seventeenth to early eighteenth century. The bulk of terminology was German or Latin borrowings for which Russian equivalents were coined only later. This illustrates well how new phenomena were introduced into the system (Russian empire). The prevalent way of rendering foreign borrowings was $A = A_1$. Creating Russian equivalents was partly according to the formula $A = B$, partly $A = 'A_1$, or B', partly $A = A_1/B$. This happened mostly in the period from 1725 onwards in the eighteenth century. In this period, many mathematical publications and textbooks were published. In the first half of the century, heavy borrowings continued. Yet as we move further into the late eighteenth century, we see attempts to create Russian terms and borrow with more caution.

Such is, for instance, the dynamics of verbal analytical constructions before 1725 (Reitz 1990, 155). Reitz registers only two such syntactic constructions: Verb + Direct Object (in the Accusative case), such as *tvoriti umnozhenie* ("to make multiplication"), and Verb + Indirect Object (in the Instrumental case), as in *priiti ostatkov* ("to have as remainders"). Both examples come from a 1703 textbook, L. Magnitskii's *Arifmetika* (Arithmetics). Yet in the period after the Academy of Science had been established and started its work, 1725–1820, the repertoire of verbal analytical constructions grew enormously and lacked little as compared to further periods of Russian mathematical language. In the texts she analyzed, Reitz identified the following numbers of such constructions: before 1725, 25 verbal analytical constructions; 1725–1820, 148; 1820–1920, 160; after 1920, 188.

Obviously, the period 1725–1820 was a period of important and massive innovations in Russian mathematical language. Reitz is, however, careful to ascribe such radical change to the fact that many mathematical publications in eighteenth-century Russia were translations from German and French. She registers the following interesting fact. Her comparison of Russian translations with their German and French originals showed that a considerable number of Russian verbal analytical constructions correspond to simple verbs in source texts: out of 73 verbal analytical constructions in Russian texts only 45 are also verbal analytical constructions in German and French (61% and 64%, respectively), the rest being either simple verbs or other types of constructions. In Reitz's opinion, this means that although translations did play an important role, in the eighteenth century, Russian (mathematical) language took its own way. This supposition, according to Reitz, is further corroborated by the fact that lexical components of constructions in Russian and in corresponding foreign texts were not always the same. After considering all pros and contras, Reitz concludes that, although one should be careful to ascribe new developments in Russian mathematical language of the eighteenth century only to translation, one can safely say, nevertheless, that Russian benefited from what German and French had offered it in translations (1990, 165).

It is clear that translation played a key role in forming the terminological vocabulary of Russian mathematics and enriched it with analytical (verbal) constructions. I would like to comment on Reitz's statement that Russian went its own way when in Russian translations analytical verbal constructions were used even when there were none in the originals. Reitz seems to count translation's influence on the development of the language only when there is a direct lexical or syntactic correspondence between source and target phrases. Yet she seems to underestimate the significance and power of translation's influence in that translation introduced not only terms, but also modes of expression (and of thinking) into Russian. Translation influenced syntactic constructions, and, as a result, analytical constructions became a stylistic hallmark of scholarly and scientific discourse.

*Table 8.1* Russian Analytical Constructions in Translations

| Analytical constructions | 1725–1820 | 1820–1920 | After 1920 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Verbal | 61.64% | 0 | 86.96% |
| Nominative | 60.98% | 0 | 66.67% |
| Symbolic (with mathematical symbols) | 79.07% | 97.22% | 93.75% |
| Adjectival | 70.0% | 100% | 0 |
| Adverbial | 46.34% | 12.5% | 53.85% |
| Prepositional | 0 | 0 | 25.64% |
| In Subjunctive mood | 0 | 26.67% | 50.0% |
| Average | 45% | 47.28% | 62.81% |

Translation provided Russian mathematics not only with vocabulary and syntactic structures but also with other stylistic features of scholarly communication. That is why translations used analytical constructions regardless of whether they were prompted by originals: translation introduced this feature into Russian, the feature was selected, and translation had to comply with a new systemic requirement.

In the conclusion to her study, now considering not only verbal analytical constructions, but also other types of analytical constructions, Reitz provides the statistics of the correspondence of Russian analytical constructions in translations to analytical constructions in their German and French originals (see Table 8.1; 1990, 321).

This table clearly shows how many analytical constructions and of what types entered Russian mathematical language through translation. These are, in Reitz's terminology, translations of analytical constructions. As a linguist and historian of the Russian language, Reitz highlights facts proving that translation was not the most important factor in the development of Russian language. For us, however, it is more interesting to note a weighty contribution translation made. In different periods, translation supplied different types of constructions, and almost all the time more than 50% of the contributions came directly coming from original German or French texts. (Let us note that Table 8.1 shows other zones potentially interesting for the translation student: after 1920, translation seems to have played in Russia as important role of a language innovator as it did in the eighteenth century.)

Reitz's data are certainly not exhaustive: for example, it would be interesting to compare the ratio of analytical constructions in translated and original texts written in Russian. Yet they provide an insight into the workings of translation when a social system goes through a period when it actively borrows from the environment. Translation introduces new options into the meaning horizon. The above examples illustrate exactly this: translation supplied new meaning options in the fact (thematic) dimension and in the social dimension (French and German became the *alter* for Russia's

*ego*, and Russia benefited from this axis of inter-systemic interaction). Translation has also been shown to be a trigger of internal systemic (linguistic) mechanisms: it activated Russian syntactic analytism and enriched Russian scholarly and scientific vocabulary (when first Latin borrowings were replaced by Russian terminology: 'A = $A_1$', 'A = B', 'A = $A_1$, or B', 'A = $A_1$/B'). Meaning reproduces itself first of all in the form of notions, concepts, and terms (Luhmann 2004, 271). When introduced into the system, innovations are apprehended as differences in system states which lead to further differences and thereby generate information, defined as an event that brings about a connection between differences (Luhmann 1995, 67–9, 75). Meaning reproduces itself via information. Translation supplies the system with events or phenomena that become information for the system. Some of this information may be rejected, yet it inevitably leaves traces which may, one day, be picked up and followed (Luhmann 2004, 270–1). Some Latin terminology was rejected in eighteenth-century Russia, yet it led to creating new patterns in the Russian scholarly language—Russian terminology or analytical constructions: being introduced, analytism was accepted by the system as the desired (required as stylistically appropriate) state towards which the system moved, seemingly independently of translation, yet following the path trodden by early translations. This brings us into the temporal dimension of evolution, although, one may say, on a micro-scale: the past with translations of foreign texts propelled the present (and the future) of Russian scholarly style of writing.

## 8.2. REGAINING PARADISE

The separation of evolution into stages, or rather, aspects, is suggested only for the purposes of description. The stages are all merged. As we have seen in the example above, translation suggested certain syntactic constructions into the mathematical language of eighteenth century Russia. This triggered the process of selection: the constructions were approved by the system, and they replaced Russian predominantly synthetic constructions or simple verbs. Translation now had to obey the rule which it itself had suggested and which had been approved by the system. After the selection of what translation had suggested, translations had to be done in accordance with the new rule even to the extent of rendering simple or synthetic constructions in the original with analytical constructions, now stylistically more appropriate for this type of discourse (mathematics). This shows how the aspects of evolution overlap.

Translation played the indispensable role of a supplier of discourse elements at the stage of variation. Indeed, without it, the system would not have had a pool of variants for selection and enriching its meaning horizon. The system would have been tautologically reproducing itself, missing the chance of efficiently restructuring itself by meeting the challenges of the irritations

coming from the environment. Translation was called upon to provide new options of meaning, and translation did provide them. However, not everything was found acceptable for the system: certain Latinisms were rejected and replaced with Russian terms (the notions denoted by the rejected Latin terms were not, however, rejected!). Thus, at the stage of selection, the system had the final say. Translation was a *sine qua non* of the evolution, yet it did not determine the direction or outcomes of the evolution.

At the stage of variation, translation may flood the system with innovations (that is, foreign phenomena). This may even endanger the autopoiesis of the system as a unique type of communication. Then, the system is likely to react by suppressing or at least limiting the welcoming openness to the phenomena transferred from the environment.

It cannot be emphasized enough that the three stages of evolution take place in a circularity, and not in a linear causality, although the stage when the system welcomes innovations may last for a while, before the latter may come to be seen as overwhelming and dangerous and, therefore, new options of meaning may become less welcome. This stage of a relative 'respite', on a macro-scale, may be used by the system to digest what has been selected previously.

As a generator of new meaning options, translation seems to play a more important role at the first stage—variation. The selection and final stabilization, when what is selected is fully incorporated into the systemic internal communication and becomes a rule of the communication, seem to turn translation from an active social agent into a passive one, whose function is no longer to suggest but to confirm and conform. Translating original German and French simple verbs or synthetic constructions with analytic constructions (originally not typical of the Russian syntax) is translation's confirmation of the selected and stabilized language forms and conformation to new language rules.

Evolution may be considered for each transferred item or on a larger scale. Viewed from a more general standpoint, when the evolutionary cycle with regard to verbal and nominative constructions ended (see Table 8.1), another evolutionary cycle was activated with regard to other analytical constructions (1820–1920). For example, symbolic and adjectival constructions grew in number. Reitz also observed the exact correspondence between Russian and German or French subjunctive constructions in translations and originals, which led her to conclude that the influence of translations cannot be excluded (1990, 316).

To summarize, translation participates in the evolutionary cycle of the social system. It supplies new options at the stage of variation and confirms and conforms to the selections made at the stages of selection and stabilization. At all three stages, whatever its function, translation does not have a final say; it is up to the system whether a suggested option be accepted and integrated into the internal communication or rejected. Yet even rejected options leave traces and may later be followed upon. Also,

when translation introduces a new phenomenon, it is hard to get rid of the new option—it stays in the horizon of meaning, even if only as a rejected option. The rejected option may be accepted one day when/if the system changes. Translation, thus, may be said to play two diametrically opposed roles in society—it destabilizes systemic internal communication (at the stage of variation) and contributes to its establishment (at the stages of selection and stabilization).

## 8.3. TWO IN ONE: PRO AND CONTRA

> "We don't agree about anything. It's perfectly delightful". [ . . . ] "I don't see anything delightful in my disagreeing with Mrs. Westgate," said Percy Beaumont. "Well, I do!" Mrs. Westgate declared [ . . . ] "I assure you we are always discussing and differing". [ . . . ] Mrs. Westgate's positive quality evidently had its attractions, for Beaumont was constantly at his hostess's side.
>
> —Henry James. *An International Episode*

Yet another related issue to consider in this chapter is conflict and the role of translation in it. Luhmann views conflict as a parasitic social system, as an obstacle created by a communicative contradiction. Communication events interlock on the basis of negation: "I do not do what you want me to do, and you do not do what I want you to do." The communication of this type can continue because the communication reacts to contradiction.

Conflicting communication refuses to absorb the resources of the system, in which it is produced. Conflict constitutes a danger for the base-system. The system, in which conflict arises, finds itself in the need to contain the conflict within the accepted boundaries. If the system manages to do that, this is what we have earlier in this chapter referred to as evolution. Evolution requires contradiction, that is, a possibility to negate social-systemic contents and expectations. Contradiction, then, prompts search for other options of continuing communication within the system. The social system's capability of allowing and tolerating conflicts is the prerequisite for evolution. Yet if the system loses control over a conflict, problems and disruptions of communication inevitably result. In society, conflicts are not infrequently repressed when they go out of hand. In earlier types of societies, certain social roles were introduced, for instance nobility in stratified societies, which enabled the society to cope with, curb, and resolve conflicts. Eventually, a third party, umpire, has developed into a socially differentiated function—legal subsystem, whose responsibility is to ensure continuous communication by limiting social opposition and eliminating conflicts (Baraldi, Corsi, and Esposito 1997, 97–9).

Each conflict is based on contradiction, and each social system contains a possibility to communicate a negation of its own communication. This possibility is provided, on the fundamental level, by the medium of meaning, and by language with its 'yes/no' code. The source of the options opposing the existing ones is the two-sided nature of form. As soon as the boundary is drawn, a (potentially) infinite self-referential cycle of checking and re-checking the self against the other, or re-entries, starts.

We have seen that translation is at heart of the system's self-reference. Translation straddles the boundary between the system and its environment. This allows translation to manifest two contradicting facets: on the one hand, it supplies the system with options which allow the system to develop contradictions; on the other hand, translation is summoned to resolve conflicts. This is possible because translation sees both sides of the form. Translation is based on the contradictory nature of the boundary—uniting and separating. Each conflict is the result of translation as the re-entry of the system/environment difference back into the system; yet each conflict, which boils down to the contradiction between ego and alter, can only be resolved by the act of translation.

The resolution of conflicts happens at different levels. A conflict may arise within the system, and this is the type of conflict we have considered so far. In such a case, translation provides a re-confirmation of the system's difference from the environment, of the dissimilarity of the system and environment. A reassuring (re-)confirmation of the system's distinctness can be made only against something else (the environment or a part thereof). How can the system get a backdrop for the (re-)confirmation of its integrity? This can be made possible by commissioning translation to provide a comparison in the form of re-entry. Such (re-)confirmation gains especially high value when the system is in a precarious situation or on the verge of disintegration and intrasystemic instability.

Yet the conflict may be viewed as the conflict between the system and its environment. That happens when what is viewed as one system by party 1, is seen as a form with two sides—system and environment—by party 2. In this case, translation is summoned by part 2 as a source of the re-entry that would show the difference between the two conflicting parties as the difference between and the incompatibility of the system with its environment. Party 1, however, will employ translation as a source of the re-entry that would provide another difference schema in which the conflicting parties will be shown to belong to the same side of a form juxtaposed to a created common environment. Translation would not be held responsible for finding such difference schema. That will be the responsibility of party 1. Yet translation will be responsible for rendering the new schema to party 2. For party 2, translation will be an agent splitting party 1 and party 2, where party 1 will stand for the system and party 2 will be viewed as a part of party 1's environment. For party 1, translation will be an agent uniting the conflicting parties against a newly created form and a new re-entry.

Another possibility of conflict is when both sides of a form act together and enter into a conflict with the entire world or a part thereof—that is, when the form conflicts with external phenomena. In this case, translation will once again render a re-entry that would unite both sides of the form against the entire world or a part thereof, playing the role of the common environment of both sides of the form and providing a uniting rationale for the alliance. Such state of affairs will redress the balance between the form and the world in that the two sides of the form will be united and act as one side of a larger form, the other side of which will be the rest of the world (the original form vs. the world).

In all these cases, translation will still act as a boundary phenomena, but what is noteworthy, in the situation of conflict, translation will be asked to limit its otherwise twofold function—uniting the system with the environment and closing the system from the environment—to only one of the aspects—either uniting or ensuring a disjunction. Translation's 'natural' tendency to perform both functions at the same time will be discouraged. Such is a particularity of translation's functioning in conflict. All three levels of conflicts can be considered as variations of the same conflict depending on the level of observation. Translation will act in all three as an indispensable agent since interaction will be carried out across boundaries, yet translation will function differently as compared to its usual operation.

# 9 Power, Collective Action, and Translation

At certain points of history, translation becomes a *sine qua non conditio* of speeding up social evolution, turning it from a smooth process into a revolutionary leap. In such moments, translation may be summoned as a channel of transfers from the environment into the system. To understand how this happens, we need to consider translation's structural couplings with the politics subsystem.

## 9.1. COLLECTIVE ACTION

From the systems-theoretical point of view, politics is one of the subsystems in the function-based modern society. Its function is to facilitate the formation and operation of collectively binding mechanisms of a social system. One of the important aspects of the collectively binding mechanisms in society is collective action. In the context of the system/environment relationship, collective action is viewed not so much as a lever for structuring internal power relations, but rather as prompted by the system's relationship with its environment (Luhmann 1995, 198).

Social systems are composed of actions, yet actions become collectively binding for the entire society only under specific circumstances. What is at stake when a social system is provoked by its environment to act collectively is whether the system is developed enough and ready to act collectively. Collective action considerably improves the relationship of the system with its environment, that is, the system's external functioning, thanks to internal restrictions. Collective action, being one of many individual actions in society, is marked by special symbols which distinguish the collective action as binding for the entire social system. For instance, consensus may vest one action with the status of collective action or a religiously sanctified ritual may be presented as having no alternatives and thus binding for the whole society. The symbols of collective action, then, may become (relatively) freed of context and open possibilities for making decisions with more or less open content. The greater is the degree of freedom of collective action offered by its symbols, the greater are internal systemic restrictions.

Hierarchy is a usual social form established for this, and the apex of the social ladder is a symbol of constantly available official potential for collective action. Collective action provides the system with such disposition of its relationship with its environment that separates this relationship from the general reproduction of the system. Collective action prompts systems to develop functionally specific mechanisms ensuring its smooth operation. Systems with such mechanisms can control their influence on their environments; they can vary it over time. To do this, however, they require resources, information, and the ability to condition the behavior of the system according to the obtained information. The system/environment relationship leads to a higher complexity of the system, making more possibilities available, yet requiring more constraints, too. Indeed, the claim to collective action has caused many a problem to the politics subsystem, which, in modern society, takes upon itself the function of making probable the improbability of achieving the socially legitimized collective action (Luhmann 1995, 199–201).

Politics operates in the medium of power, which is one of the symbolically generalized communication media. Power makes it possible for ego to act by appropriating alter's capacity to act independently. Power is viewed not as a property of someone who has it in his/her disposal, but as a communication medium necessary for the coordination of selections and for the production of respective expectations. Power does not depend so much on the pre-given motivations; rather it generates motivations itself (Baraldi, Corsi, and Esposito 1997, 113).

It should be emphasized that although politics assumes the responsibility for collective action, this does not make it any higher functionally in the function-based society than any other subsystem. The function-based society is a system of equal inequalities where each function subsystem performs its own function and cannot be controlled by any other function subsystem without controlling an aspect of the latter's existence. Subsystems are equally independent, yet interdependent: what one can do, the others cannot do; yet each of them can fulfill only one function and depends on the other subsystems for everything else. In the next section, I will consider how the politics system finds itself in need of the functional properties of the translation subsystem, because without translation, the politics subsystem cannot obtain necessary resources and information for supporting its claim to collective action, which, as we have seen, comes from the system's need to control its relationship with its environment, resulting, if necessary, in intrasystemic restructurings.

## 9.2. MEANING-FULL TRANSLATION

Translation's function is to provide the system with meaning, where meaning is a horizon of options for the system to assess and choose from. The

system's dealing with its environment is based on the reduction of the latter's complexity: the system cannot comprehend all complexity of the environment and inevitably reduces it. Meaning is a form of adaptation to complexity. In SST, meaning is understood as a phenomenological category—as a surplus of references to social-systemic experiences and actions (Luhmann 1995, 60). Complexity may be defined as a lack of information. Complexity prevents the system from observing itself or its environment: too many options and no patterns of redundancies. The system reduces the complexity of its environment by selectivity based on meaning references—at every point in time, system selects only one option as 'realizable', leaving the rest in the periphery.

To get information from/about the environment, the system has to come and keep in contact with the environment. The system should always keep an eye on its environment. No system can afford to be autistic for any considerably long stretch of time. That is why the system assigns the function of watching its environment to some of its subsystems, translation being one of them.

Translation constitutes meaning, that is, provides information about the state of the environment and options for handling the information as new options on the system's horizon. This is the meaning-constituting aspect of translation's function as a boundary phenomenon and as a mechanism of the system/environment interaction. Translation always provides or contributes to a surplus of options. The options, introduced by translation into the meaning horizon of the system, are distributed between the three categories of references: actualized, possible, unacceptable (Luhmann 1995, 60). Some of the new options will be considered by the system as realizable; they will be appropriated and made 'real' or actualized. Some will be marked as possible, yet not realizable at this moment. Some will be found unacceptable. Yet this does not mean that they will be discarded; they will be simply tagged as unacceptable now. These references may become acceptable for future actualization. Whatever translation brings into the system and adds to the latter's meaning horizon is kept, even only for memory and future references. For example, the system may need some of the rejected options for constructing its history. Etymological dictionaries provide an example of a treasury guarded by the system's memory, where not only accepted but also rejected options are kept.

Meaning is understood as the acquisition of significance in difference. Traditionally, meaning is considered in terms of identity. Yet such an approach leads nowhere because the meaningful is distinguished from the meaningless based on identity, but identity fails to be identified and remains obscure. Luhmann approaches the notion of meaning from the fact that "a *difference* is contained in every experience of meaning, namely, the difference between what is *actually given* and what can *possibly* result from it" (1995, 74; emphases in the original). This allows to de-tautologize meaning's self-reference and this is how meaning itself acquires meaning.

Moreover, meaning's self-reference is sliced into three dimensions (although one can speak of a world of dimensions, the decomposition into the three meaning dimensions is but the first step). The three meaning dimensions are: factual, temporal, and social. The social dimension deals with what the system at any time accepts as 'like itself', compatible with itself. This dimension articulates the assumption of likeness (vs. unlikeness) for every experience of the world and the fixing of meaning in the form of the opposition between consensus and dissent. The social dimension is fundamental for any social-systemic interaction. The social dimension is ubiquitous in the domain of the social because every meaning option, provided for the system's internal processing, is sieved and weighed and assessed by the system according to its criteria of compatibility with its internal communication, in the context of constant comparison of one's own experience and actions with those of the others. The social dimension of meaning is implied in any social, intrinsically meaning-related interaction, whose indispensable part is translation, as was shown in the previous chapter to be formally re-entry. Therefore, whenever one speaks of translation at the level of social systems' interaction, one is bound to deal with the social dimension of meaning and vice versa.

In the factual dimension, the system divides the reference structure into 'this' and 'something else'. The underlying difference between the social and factual dimension is that the latter is independent with regard to any thematically formulated values. The social dimension is devoid of any factual articulation of meaning and encompasses everything. This is the domain of thematic samenesses or differences. The factual dimension imposes a choice of direction upon each operation in that the operation takes into account opposing directions whose accessibility is not annulled. This is how the connectivity of operations is ensured: operations always have to decide whether they remain where they are or move on to another option. No self-identification/self-reference is possible without this. Therefore, no system can reproduce itself as a particular type of communication, different from all other types of communication, without this type of reference. It is only natural that the translating agent is most actively involved in this vital thematic self-referential process of the system by suggesting new thematic areas and signaling their differences from the existing thematic repertoire of the system.

The temporal dimension of meaning splits systemic history into different temporal 'now' and 'then'. In the medium of meaning, the temporal dimension allows the system to move between past, present, and future and construct itself by including into itself what was or what will be in the space occupied now by the present. Thus, the past is apprehended as past only in relation to a present-with-a-future; the present is seen as present only vis-à-vis a past-with-a-future; and the future is anticipated as future only as the future of a present-with-a-past. Here again, transfers from one of the temporal space into another are made possible by translation.

Meaning is never static—it is ever changing, actualizing/virtualizing available references. Certain references introduced through translation may be tagged as belonging to the 'unacceptable' at one point in time. Yet at another, they are 'promoted' and granted the status of 'possible' or even 'actualized'. Translation's role in providing the system with a horizon of options cannot be overestimated. Translation creates and always replenishes a storehouse of options, which provides the system with selection possibilities.

## 9.3. TRANSLATION WANTED

### 9.3.1. Midwifery and Blood Infusion

Translation supplies options of meaning which may be found by the system either successful and failing. Even-Zohar, when he describes the situations in which translation supplies new literary genres, means successful cases. He discusses translation's successful meaning options: the target literary system (or, in his terms, polysystem) accepts new genres, and original works in the target language in these genres are created. Yet a literary work may be translated but found unacceptable by the target system. In any case, translation is considered to be a subsystem and a boundary phenomenon of the national literary system.

Even-Zohar lists three types of historical situations in which particular social conditions require translation to come to the fore and play one of the principal parts in the overall literary polysystem. This happens, according to Even-Zohar, when (1) a literary polysystem is *in statu nascendi* without a fully formed literary tradition and with a certain number of free genre 'slots' which are to be filled up and which cannot be developed within the literary polysystem; translation introduces the lacking genres into the polysystem; (2) when a literary polysystem is 'peripheral' among other national literatures or 'weak' or a combination of the two, translation makes up for what the literary polysystem lacks; lastly, (3), when a national literature is experiencing a crisis or finds itself at a 'turning point' in its history; translation infuses 'new blood' and inspiration (1990, 47). Although Even-Zohar postulates the complex interrelatedness of literary processes with social, economic, political, and other extra-literary facts (1990, 22–3), in the above-described three situations when translation comes to the fore, the scope of observation is primarily the literary subsystem which interacts with corresponding literary subsystems of social systems in the environment of its own social system. The collective action of the literary subsystem is harder to identify, except in the case of totalitarian social systems. During the Soviet period of Russian history, for instance, the so-called Union of Writers assumed the collective action (although it was constantly questioned by dissident writers and critics). In freer social systems, the collective

action is a sensitive balance of individual acts, some of which are socially more significant, some less. This may be more aptly described in terms of Bourdieu's theory of social fields. For us here the important thing is that the literary subsystem feels a lack of something and comes to translation so that the latter would fill in the gap. Translation looks outside the system and (hopefully) finds what the literary subsystem needs, thus mediating between the literary subsystem of a system in the environment and the literary subsystem of the home social system.

Importantly, the environment should not be reduced to literary subsystems of foreign countries. The lacking feature may be found in the same country, for example in the literary underground or in the literary past. In both latter cases, however, the literary subsystem would consider them as environment and will require the intralingual translation as the mediator.

### 9.3.2. IN THE CORRIDORS OF POWER

In the following two examples, I will consider translation as a subsystem of the overall system whose option-supplying services are utilized by the politics subsystem acting as the collective action of the system. I will use two prominent political leaders of Russian history, Peter the Great and Vladimir Lenin, to illustrate the political system as it assumes the collective action and uses translation. I have chosen these two figures, who concentrated much of the social collective action in their hands, because they help to demonstrate two different dynamics of summoning translation to fulfill their respective political agendas. It cannot be overemphasized that, although I talk about these two persons, they are considered as representatives of the social collective action, occupying the highest level of the power hierarchies in the periods of their leadership.

Both introduced radical changes into the social-systemic communication. Both realized that the values they imposed on the internal systemic communication had to come from outside of the system and could not have been produced within the system. Peter the Great (1672–1725) attempted to modernize Russia and at that time modernization meant Westernization. Hence, the task, which he undertook, was to transfer Western European values.

Vladimir Lenin (1870–1924; real name—Ul'ianov) was the leader of the Bolshevik faction of the Marxist Russian Social Democratic Labor Party (RSDLP). Under Lenin's leadership, in 1917, RSDLP seized power and created what became known eventually as the Soviet Union. Obviously, the very fact that the ideological foundation of the Party was Marx's social, economic, and political theory makes it abundantly clear that translation had to play a crucial role both in the formation of the Party and of the new socialist state. Both Peter and Lenin realized the paramount importance of translation and even translated themselves.

It should be emphasized that what follows is not biographical notes—rather, it is an attempt to consider Peter the Great and Lenin as Russian political figures in whom the collective action was focused at their respective historic periods. They were not the only representatives of collective action, let alone possessors of it. They acted on behalf of the social forces which they led.

### *9.3.2.1. Commissioned, Edited, Assessed*

If Peter did not translate verbal texts—and it is not known with certainty whether he did or did not—he definitely translated (transferred) Western European mores and lifestyle into the Russian social system. He started to conduct himself in the Western way and wear Western European dresses, and he insisted that his court should imitate the contemporary 'foreign' fashion. Every aspect of Russian life had to change. For example, among other things, he invited builders from Prussia, so that they would build in Russia "according to Prussian fashion" (Peter 1956, 27, 51–2). Peter orchestrated the entire initial stage of the Westernization of eighteenth-century Russia with translation ranking very high on his political agenda. In what follows I will provide several examples limiting them primarily to Peter's participation in verbal translation.

Peter defined the translational policy of his time. The scope of his reforms included the transfer from the Church Slavonic language as the language of official discourse to contemporary Russian. He personally approved of new, more Latin-like printing fonts and made the final decision on how Russian alphabet had to be reformed (Peter 1956, 27). Even the Bible had to be corrected and published with the new fonts (Voskresenskii 1945, 142–3).

Representing the political subsystem, Peter commissioned translations of political documents, as for instance, was the case with Queen of England Anne's official apology for an incident with the Russian ambassador Andrei Matveev (Peter 1956, 34, 487, 134). Peter defined the repertoire of political documents to be translated. In 1711, Peter commissioned the Ambassadors' office (an equivalent of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) to publish extracts from inheritance legislations of France and England, and, "if possible" also to find corresponding Venetian laws (Peter 1962, 149).

He also commissioned translations of a wide variety of other publications. For instance, Peter ordered the Synod to translate three books on economics from German and, "having first translated tables of contents, to send them to His Highness without delay." In another time, Peter sent the same Synod two Protestant books and a German universal historical Lexicon for translation (Voskresenskii 1945, 127–9).

Peter also kept his hand on the pulse of the translation process along all its path. He received manuscripts of commissioned translations, and he demanded that all newly published translations should be sent to his personal library.

Peter went to great lengths to ensure that translations would have no unjustified omissions and would be of good quality. For instance, Peter commissioned a translation of Leonard Christopher Sturmius's book on military architecture. The translation was made by Aleksandr Golovkin. Yet in his book, Sturmius did not publish charts. Peter charged the Russian envoy to Berlin A. Lit and later Aleksandr Golovkin to negotiate with Sturmius so that the author would provide his original charts for the Russian version (Peter 1964, 308–9, 603–4). In his letters to the statesman and translator Iakov Brius, Peter asked if a "little Swedish book in white binding" (possibly, military regulations) and English instructions for the construction of cannons for the navy were translated and checked against the originals, and if so, Peter urged Brius to send the translations to him for final approval (Peter 1956, 256, 685, 261, 688). In another letter, Peter acknowledged the receipt of the same "little Swedish book" (Peter 1956, 379). This seems to be the usual cycle with Peter: he commissioned, somebody translated, he received the work and granted imprimatur (Peter 1950, 105).

He could, however, withdraw imprimatur or demand corrections before a translation would be published. For instance, Peter charged the publisher Ivan Musin-Pushkin to check a translation of Henri de Rohan's *Le parfait capitaine* (Peter 1956, 462, 776). Being busy, as was the case with the military campaign against Sweden in 1709, Peter demanded that "incorrect and unclear" translations be edited by others, but when he had an opportunity he would also edit himself (Peter 1950, 101; Voskresenskii 1945, 126). If necessary, Peter explicated the underlying logic of his corrections:

> Since foreigners are used to pad out their books with numerous unnecessary stories with only one goal—to make their books look thicker, all that, except the essence and a brief introduction, should not be translated; but even the introductions should be not for vain beauty but for teaching and edification of the reader. This is why I corrected a treatise on agriculture [by leaving out the unnecessary], and I am attaching the treatise as a model, and all books should be translated like it, without unnecessary stories, which only consume time and discourage readers from reading. (Voskresenskii 1945, 148)

Peter seems to have had a more or less clear set of his editorial requirements. He insisted that books had to be translated in the 'new', i.e., the reformed Russian, language. No doubt, this was one of the components of what he termed "good style" in a Decree to the Holy Synod about translating of a book by Samuel von Pufendorf: "[The book should] be translated not carelessly, but clearly and in [the] good style" (September 11, 1724) (Voskresenskii 1945, 148).

A number of times in his correspondence with those involved in translation (not necessarily translators by occupation), Peter expressed his views on how translations had to be made. In one letter, addressed to the

translator Ivan Zotov, we find Peter's testimony how he edited translations (1950, 106):

> We have read Blondel's book on fortification which you translated and found conversations translated well and clearly. But [not so] where the book teaches how to build fortifications. Also, measurement units in tables are not named [ . . . ] That part is very vague and unclear; of that part we have cut out a page and replaced it with a corrected version. We are sending you both the book and the cut-out page, so that you could see the mistakes and vague passages. Take this into account while working on the book you are translating now [A. Mallet's *Les travaux de Mars ou l'art de guerre*], in order to make your translation clearer; and do not translate word for word, but having understood the meaning, write the same in our language as clearly as possible.
>
> Piter.

The letter to Zotov was written in 1709. By 1720, in *The General Charter of the Departments of the State Senate*, in one of the chapters (XXXI) dealing specifically with the office of translator, the requirements of accuracy and clarity, together with good command of foreign languages and promptness in work, are cast in legal terms:

> The office of Translator shall be established in the Departments so that everything, related to the work of the Departments or anything else that will be given to him, the Translator shall render clearly and unambiguously from foreign languages into Russian, in that the meaning should be correct and the essence in the translation should be in accordance with the original writing. It shall be enough for each Department to have one skilful Translator, except for the Department of Foreign Affairs, which requires more Translators skilful in different foreign languages. And when the Translator is given an assignment, he shall translate as promptly as possible, failing which he shall be fined and deductions shall be made from his salary. He shall also sign his translation in testimony, failing which he shall also be fined and punished. (Peter 1961, 91)

Peter even thought about training translators. In a draft of his decrees, we find the following:

> For translating books, there is a dire need of translators, especially knowledgeable [in such subjects, as mathematics, mechanics, anatomy, medicine, botany, military architecture, etc.]. For no translator, without knowing what he translates, can translate. Therefore, they should be prepared so that those, who know languages, but have no knowledge of the subject matter, should be taught subjects, and those who

> are knowledgeable, but do not speak foreign tongues, should be sent to study languages, and there shall be both Russians and foreigners, those born here or those who came to this country in childhood and speak our tongue naturally, because it is easier to translate into one's own language, than into a foreign language. (Voskresenskii 1945, 139)

More examples of Peter's involvements with translation could be provided, yet the point seems to be clear enough. The collective action, represented by Peter as the political leader of the Russian empire in the early eighteenth century, required translation as a *sine qua non conditio* of the fulfillment of the dominant political agenda, hence, the Emperor himself paid close attention to translation, its repertoire and practice, even in the most difficult moments of his reign—in the midst of warfare and reforms of a national scale.

### *9.3.2.2. Where Lenin Disagreed with Marx*

> The occupation of translator is terrible, the profession of businessman would provide you with better opportunities to use your free time for studies and propaganda.
>
> —Karl Marx

> It is more pleasant and useful to conduct "the experiment of revolution" than to write about it.
>
> —Vladimir Lenin

Peter was entitled to the symbolic collective action by being born into the royal family and inheriting the Russian throne. Lenin had to struggle for the collective action—first within the party of social democrats and later on the national scale. But both Peter and Lenin attached paramount importance to translation as a means to carry out their political agendas of reforming the dominant social discourse or, in social-systemic terms, as a means to renegotiate social-systemic communication. We cannot be absolutely sure whether Peter himself translated verbal texts or not, there are no doubts as to whether Lenin did. Lenin not only edited translations of Marxist literature into Russian but also translated some of them.

Marxist ideas and publications had started to penetrate Russian frontiers before Lenin was born. Unpublished translations of Marx and Engels's works were circulated in Russia as early as in the 1840s (Kalekina 1957, 10; Tartakovskii et al. 1969, 34). Marxism had become the dominant political discourse among Russian socialists by the 1880s—in social-systemic terms, it had acquired the status of a distinct social-systemic formation with its eigen-communication (Tartakovskii et al.1969, 32, 41).

The 1880s was the period when Lenin became interested in Marxism. In 1889–90, inflamed with enthusiasm, he translated Marx and Engels's *Manifesto of the Communist Party*. The translation, however, has not survived (*L* 1967, I: 567[1]). In the 1890s, Lenin translated some other Marxist and socialist literature from German and English: an article about Friedrich Engels, Karl Bücher's book *Die Entstehung der Volkswirtschaft*, works by Karl Kautsky and the English theorists of trade-unionism Sidney and Beatrice Webb and Hugh Hindman (ibid., II: 566, IV: 447). In 1903, Lenin translated Engels's article "Die Bauernfrage in Frankreich und Deutschland"; a fragment of this translation has survived (ibid., VII: 447; Tartakovksii et al. 1969, 71).

As early as in 1902–3, becoming a person of note in revolutionary circles, Lenin started editing translations made by others (*L* 1967, VII: 446). Lenin's exchanging the role of translator for the role of editor coincides with the schism in RSDLP (1903) in which Lenin played a key part and after which he assumed the leadership of the Bolshevik faction of the party. This may be viewed as the period when Lenin gained the status which allowed him if not to define, then at least to influence the party's collective action. In this period (1905), Lenin was also appointed the editor-in-chief of the political department of the publishing houses *Vpered* (Onwards) and *Znanie* (Knowledge), which meant that he was actively involved in defining the repertoire and quality of published and translated materials. In 1906, in *Znanie* under Lenin, a new version of the key communist publication, *The Manifesto of the Communist Party*, was translated by Wacław Worowski and published. Although several Russian versions had existed, the new one was considered the most faithful in the opinion of Lenin and his colleagues. Earlier, in 1904 in Geneva, a publishing house (*Izdatel'stvo sotsial-demokraticheskoi partiinoi literatury V. Bonch-Bruevicha and N. Lenina*, V. Bonch-Bruevich's and N. Lenin's Publishing House of social-democratic party literature[2]) was founded on Lenin's initiative. In 1906, in that publishing house, *Das Kapital* was retranslated because making a "precise" Russian version for Russian socialists was also considered by Lenin and his coworkers to be one of the top priorities (Tartakovskii et al. 1969, 54). But Lenin went beyond only the Russian readership—he initiated a committee whose mission was to publish Marxist literature in Armenian and Georgian (Tartakovskii et al. 1969, 59). This is how Lenin began to carry out his vision of the Marxist revolution on the international scale (cf. Tyulenev 2010). Such were the major milestones of Lenin's involvement with the translation of Marxist literature before the 1917 Socialist Revolution.

Let us consider some of Lenin's own statements about his involvement with translation. Lenin assigned great importance to translating Marxist literature for the furtherance of the revolutionary cause. This becomes clear from a closer look at the aspects of his translation-related activities. As we have seen, he first tried his own hand in translation, and then he went on to determining the translation processes—he commissioned translations and

provided guidance to translators. Lenin's letters of the first years of the twentieth century show that he dealt with translators directly—for example, noting and recommending those whom he considered capable of translating, such as a certain A. Sanin (*L* 1967, XLVI: 245). Lenin had a pool of good translators: in a letter, he wrote that if his addressee did not have a "good" translator for an article, the article should be sent to him and he would find a translator for the task (ibid., XLVI: 75).

Lenin commissioned translations of the works that would meet the most pressing needs of the revolutionary struggle. The following extract shows how Lenin substantiated his choice of a work by Engels for translation:

> I am eager to remind you of one book. It is *absolutely necessary* to translate and publish the book as soon as possible. [ . . . ] This is Friedrich Engels' *Die Reichsverfassungskampagne* from Mering's collection of Marx and Engels' Works. [ . . . ] It is very timely—*especially* right now. (ibid., XLVII: 31)

From a 1903 letter to one of the party leaders Georgii Plekhanov, it becomes clear how Lenin used translation to move on from the national level to the international:

> I'm sending you *The Proletariat* [a paper of Armenian socialists]. Please, ask Lalaiants or somebody else *to translate everything* about nationalism and *federalism* and send the translation to me *as soon as possible*. We should publish an article about them [Armenian socialists] (the article sent to us requires editing, that is why we need the text [of the entire paper] badly). (ibid., XLVI: 261; emphases in the original.)

Lenin actively edited translations. In a letter, Lenin mentions the problems that he faced as an editor of translations: "Now there are very few good manuscripts, *there are no good translators*. (I am struggling with *correcting* translations) [ . . . ]" (ibid., XLVI: 268; emphases in the original.). His active involvement as an editor of translated Marxist materials is mentioned in other letters of the period (for example, ibid., XLVI: 28; XLVII: 31, 329). For Lenin, publishing Marxist literature was obviously an important part of his revolutionary work since it paved the way for the propaganda of socialist ideas.

Since the task of Russian Marxists and of Lenin personally was to spread scientific approach to revolutionary activities (Marx' theory was chosen precisely because it provided a profound foundation for revolutionary practice), Marx' works and works of those thinking along the same lines had to be translated and, thereby, made accessible to all those in Russia whom Russian Marxists hoped to win over in the heated political debates of the time (ibid., XXIV: 263; Tartakovskii et al. 1969, 42–4).

Both Lenin's own translations and his editorial responsibilities, including defining the repertoire of works to be translated, were always prompted not so much by academic or purely theoretical interests—but rather by the immediate political struggle. Thus, when the Bolsheviks debated with the Mensheviks (the opposing minority faction of the RSDLP), Lenin edited a translation of Engels's article "The Bakunists at Work" where the strategy and tactics of the proletariat's struggle in the context of the bourgeois-democratic revolution were discussed. In the above-mentioned publishing houses *Vpered* and *Znanie*, those writings by Marx and Engels which allowed the Bolsheviks to benefit from Western European political experience had absolute priority (Tartakovskii et al. 1969, 51–2).

Lenin critically assessed Russian translations of Marxist authors published by rival socialist factions. In 1901, in a letter to Plekhanov, he wrote that he compared an article by Engels with its Russian translation published by V. Chernov, one of the leaders of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party, a non-Marxist Russian political party, and found eighteen additional lines added in the translation which, in Lenin's opinion, distorted some of Engels' ideas. Lenin double-checked with Plekhanov if the latter knew of any possible sources of the addition (1967, XLVI: 131). Thus, to an extent, translation was a locus of Russian political struggles. Such high status of translation in that period of Russian revolutionary history is further corroborated by the fact that Lenin's first translations even figured in police reports and were counted as activities that incriminated him.

A brief reference is to be made to the biography of Marx written by Lenin (ibid., XXVI: 43–93). The biography contained a detailed bibliography of Marxist literature—"mostly foreign" (ibid., XXVI: 45). What is striking about the list is that Lenin never failed to mention whether Marx' works were translated into Russian or not. His major concern seems to have been not only to compile a catalogue of Marxist original publications but to map out further translating work in order to make more of Marx' publications available to the Russian readership.

Lenin started by stating that no complete editions of Marx' works and letters had yet existed. He continued proudly that the number of Russian translations of Marx' writings exceeded translations into any other language (ibid., XXVI: 82). Then, he chronologically listed Marx' works always mentioning if a Russian translation of each of them existed, for instance:

> In 1845, Marx and Engels together published (in Frankfurt-am-Main) a booklet *Die heilige Familie. Gegen Bruno Bauer* (besides "Literary Heritage," there are two different versions in Russian, in the collection "New Voices," Saint-Petersburg, 1906, and in "Knowledge Courier," Saint-Petersburg, 1907). By the spring of 1845, Marx wrote his theses on Feuerbach (published as an appendix to Fr. Engels' booklet *Ludwig Feuerbach*; there is a Russian translation). In 1845–1847, Marx wrote a few articles (not yet either published, or reprinted, or translated into

> Russian as a full collection) in [various] newspapers. (ibid., XXVI: 82–3)

And this meticulous list went on and on, sometimes naming both translators and editors, including Lenin himself: "*Bürgerkrieg in Frankreich* (Russian translation edited by Lenin, *Molot* [Hammer] Publishers and other editions)" (ibid., XXVI: 85).

Like Peter, Lenin went beyond verbal translation. For example, he suggested his political allies to incorporate Western European Marxists' ideas. This was the case in one of his letters to Plekhanov (1901) where Lenin asked if Plekhanov had received two issues of *Neue Zeit* with articles by Engels and Kautsky. Lenin hoped that the articles would be of help to Plekhanov (1967, XLVI: 148, 150). One may interpret this as a transfer of Marxist ideas that Lenin promoted among his colleagues thereby perpetuating the autopoiesis of the newly created system.

These examples would suffice to substantiate the argument that Lenin viewed translation as an important constituent of his political pre-revolutionary involvements. It is only natural that after the revolution of 1917, when Lenin became the head of the newly created Soviet state, translating and publishing Marxist literature and especially Marx and Engels's works continued by leaps and bounds on an unprecedented scale. As Westernization became the dominant political and social discourse in Petrine Russia, in Russia under Lenin, Marxist ideology gained the same status (*L* 1967, XXXVI: 372). Both times, the contours of the internal systemic communication were renegotiated through the coupling of the subsystems of politics and translation. These two brief case studies serve as a good illustration of how, at some points of social history, politics vitally needs translation in order to carry out its goals. We do not doubt that translation often needs politics, but politics needs translation too, because only translation can mediate its interaction with the environment. The two subsystems are indeed equally unequal.

To go back to the title of the present subsection, it would be misleading to say that Marx did not appreciate translation and, certainly, his advice to Lopatin to drop translation as a "terrible" occupation was an exaggeration and was prompted by the concern about Lopatin's poverty (1964, 572). Indeed, translation was less lucrative and hence required more time to make a decent living. Yet for Marx, the practical realization of his ideas was a more or less distant future, therefore, translating his works even into the languages where the readership was ready to absorb them did not figure among the most urgent needs. This was not so for Lenin who was in the thick of the Marxism-inspired political struggle. For Lenin and other Russian Marxists, translating Marxist works was of the utmost practical importance: translation provided them with the very foundation and substantiation of their political cause and was part and parcel of their "experiment of revolution" (*L* 1967, XXXIII: 120).

By way of conclusion of the two above-adduced case studies, I will recast them in the social-systemic terms. Both Peter and Lenin's political goals had the status of the collective action. In order to realize those goals, the system had to borrow from the Western European segment of its environment. The only way to borrow was that the system and its collective action would call upon translation as the intersystemic mediator. That explains why both Peter and Lenin, despite all their differences, had one thing in common—both paid close attention to translation as a means to reach their political goals. For them translation was a vital aspect of their political involvements. They got their hands dirty, so to speak, in practical translation because they viewed translation as a *sine qua non conditio* of their political work. The system used them as guarantors for ensuring the necessary coupling of the subsystems of politics and translation.

# 10 Throughput

## 10.1. SHUTTLING 'GOODS'

Translation exists in the context of form. As soon as the cross is drawn between a name and the rest of the form, the name acquires the status of a side of the newly created form and "each side of the form is the other side for the other side" (Luhmann 1997, 60). Thus, the cross between the sides sets translation in motion. This implies the directionality of the motion. Yet the motion is never an 'empty-handed' scurrying to and fro. Rather, it is a sort of shuttling of 'goods', an exchange of inputs and outputs—of the throughput (Luhmann 1995, 201)—between the two sides of the form or, in other terms, between the system and its environment.

The throughput can occur not only within the form but also between the form (with two sides) and the rest of the world. Imagine a sheet of paper which is divided into two parts. This is the form in which one part is juxtaposed with the other. Yet we may go beyond the edge of the sheet, and then the form, which is on the sheet, will find itself juxtaposed with the rest of the world. The throughput (implied by the juxtaposition of the sides) occurs between the sides of the form on the sheet and between the form and the rest of the world. The relationship between the form and the world becomes the two-sided relationship of a new form and, thus, may also be described as a form.

As has been noted above, the throughput has not only directionality ('to and fro'), but it also carries something from one side of the cross to the other. In psychic systems, the throughput occurs when we juxtapose and compare the sides of the form. In society, that is, in social systems, translation as a boundary phenomenon is one of the principal mechanisms of the throughput—the intra- and intersystemic interaction. Translation carries over new options for enriching the meaning horizon or, in certain periods where it becomes a constraint on social interactions (see Section 6.2.1), it carries over powerful influence on the dominant discourse and can even become, if not an explosive, then definitely an undermining factor of the dominant discourse as was shown in Section 9.3.2.

Translation is present at the very moment of creating meaning as a horizon of options for the system to assess and choose from. The system's

dealing with its environment boils down to a reduction of the latter's complexity: the system cannot comprehend all complexity of the environment and inevitably reduces it. Meaning, a surplus of references to social-systemic experiences and actions, is a means of adaptation to complexity, which is a lack of information, and the system reduces the complexity of its environment by selectivity which is based on meaning references: at every point in time, the system selects only one option as 'acceptable', ousting the rest to the periphery.

To get information from/about the environment, the system has to come in contact with the environment. The system assigns the function of contacting its environment to some of its subsystems, translation being one of them. Translation brings to the attention of the system whatever potentially applicable or relevant information it finds in the environment. Translation brings what it finds as new options and adds them to the meaning horizon for the system to consider. In this sense, translation constitutes meaning for the system. Some of the options may be found acceptable, but some will be rejected or put aside as only potentially acceptable at some point in future. Thus, the suggested options, including those originally existing in the environment, make their way into the system's meaning horizon and are distributed between the three categories of references: acceptable, potentially acceptable, and unacceptable. As we have seen in Section 9.2, these three categories appear in the three meaning dimensions—factual, temporal, and social (Luhmann 1995, 75–82). In the factual dimension, translation is most actively involved in the system's vital self-referential process. Translation brings into the system the referential background for self-reference: what is one's own can be seen only at the backdrop of the alien. Translation's role is to supply the meaning horizon of the system with new options by carrying them across the system's boundary from the environment.

Furthermore, the system looks outside by contacting what is outside. By translating what it sees, the system establishes references to the 'foreign'/'different' and creates a hierarchy of such references as relevant/necessary/desirable or undesirable/irrelevant for its autopoiesis. This differentiation leads the system a step further—to process new meaning options. There are several thematic options in the factual dimension of meaning. For example, one of the most powerful is the transfer of cultural heritage from an extinct ethnic group to an existent group. Thus, the latter acquires a past, its roots.

In the temporal dimension, translation 'carries' references across the boundaries between past, present, and future. Thanks to translation's bringing a past to the present, the system gains memory. The system's memory is based on looking back at the type of operations that have made the system what it is. Furthermore, this looking back determines the system's present observation: what translation brings from the past enables the system to distinguish between different present operations—that is, between those operations which are recognized as the system's own and those which are

recognized as belonging to the environment. Without translation's carrying past operations over into the domain of the present, the system is blind. It is also without the future, because without the past and present, it has no way of anticipating future operations which it will qualify as its own.

Translation always takes place in the present from the system's viewpoint and therefore the past and the future become visible in the present mediation of translation. On the one hand, translation of the past into the present anchors the system in its systemic self-identification: the system sees its previous operations and knows what it is. On the other hand, from the past-orientated present, the system translates its operational identity into the future and enables itself to ensure the continuity of its autopoiesis at next stages of its existence. In other words, without translation's carrying things in the temporal dimension, the system would lose its dynamic self-/hetero-referential recursive nature, its memory and its anticipating ability.

In the social dimension, translation 'carries' the systemic referentiality along the ego/alter axis. Luhmann defines the social dimension as possessing "world-universal relevance" (1995, 80). This means that ego discovers that alter is relevant to all that ego is relevant to—to all objects and themes. Translation brings samples of alter to ego and ego may be motivated to explore alter in a deeper fashion. Translation generates interest, but it can be easily carried away with its enthusiasm for alter, while introducing alter to ego (as we have seen in Chapter 8), and then the system, being concerned about its autopoiesis, may curb translation's influence.

Translation can only generate and hone ego's interest in alter. Ego is able to appreciate alter only to the extent of its own sophistication (complexity). If the system is not complex enough to appreciate any considerable number of aspects of its environment and systems in its environment, its appreciation of translation's mission and work will also be limited. Yet since no system can afford to be autistic and isolated from its environment without running the risk of falling victim to entropy, systems have to use translation so that it would bring them at least the most necessary data about the state of the environment. Increasingly, translation may, however, grow in importance as the system realizes the necessity to come to know the environment better and complexities of its structural makeup. More options brought into the system's meaning horizon may become categorized as potentially acceptable, and at some point these options may start playing crucial communication-defining role within the system, and the system may enter a new stage of its development.

The system's meaning is never static—it is ever-changing, actualizing/virtualizing available references because translation is ever busy carrying things from over the boundary. Translation enriches the meaning with new options; handling new options forces the system to develop new structures which would be capable of dealing with these new options; and the system evolves and becomes more and more complex.

Translation also carries things from the system into the environment. Usually, however, in human societies, translation carries 'goods' not into the environment in general, but rather different 'goods' into different parts of the environment. The other side of the form turns out to be not just one amorphous mass but a collection of different systems which translation's home system at a certain stage of its development, reaching a higher level of internal structural complexity, becomes able to see. Translation provides its home system with data about different systems located beyond the boundary (including the information about what communications about the home system are circulated in different systems of its environment). Then, the home system can send different inputs into different systems in its environment depending on what inputs from those systems were brought by translation into the home system. Thus, from a general throughput between the two sides of the form, thanks to translation's unceasing shuttling of 'goods', the marked space (system) moves on and fine-tunes its throughput with its environment by regulating what inputs should be sent to which of the environment's segments.

## 10.2. TRANSLATION AND THE TWO SIDES

Translation unites the two sides of the form by containing them in itself. Translation is the locus where the two sides of the form meet and where the indication of one of them is impossible unless and until the sides are brought together. Without the other side, neither of the sides exists in its form status. There is no original, if there is no translation of it into the other side. One side is indicated in relation to the other, yet the uniting is based not on the reconciliation of the extremes, but on showing the distinguishability of their distinction. Previously it was shown how translation "stitches" the system and its environment (see Figure 7.5), which makes a full foreignization in verbal translation impossible. But, since translation unites the sides of the form by demonstrating their distinguishability, a full domestication is rendered equally impossible. Any translation is neither and both. It is a matter of degrees.

Translation's movement between the two sides within the form and between the form and the world carries influence. Through translation, the system influences its environment or systems in its environment; through translation, the environment influences the system. The influence that translation carries is exerted on the communication of the target system or on the communications of systems in the environment. At worst, translation would introduce an option that will be rejected and never used, but it may, and not infrequently does, introduce something that may be, even at first rejected by the dominant discourse, accepted in marginal discourses, as was the case of the Marxist ideology in Russia considered in Section 9.3.2.2. The marginal ideology struggles with the dominant discourse

by influencing and challenging the overall communication of the system through translation. Eventually, this undermining work may succeed and the phenomena, introduced through translation, may become the basis of a new dominant discourse. In any case, translation supplies options for enriching the system's meaning horizon and thereby, to this or that degree, challenges and influences the dominant discourse.

In translation, the system gains a powerful means of expressing its action to the environment (and systems in the environment) in terms understandable for the environment. For the environment, translation is even more vital. The environment cannot act because it has no communication and no possibility to coordinate its parts—it is amorphous and has no structures that would unite it. The social environment is a conglomeration of systems, each having its own communication isolated from other systems. Translation is the mechanism which focuses the environment for translation's home system and enables the environment to speak. The environment is made whole by the internal communication of the system which divides everything into itself and the rest, yet the environment is 'dumb' in itself, being a discoordinated mass. It can gain a 'voice' and create an impression of itself as a speaking entity only through translation which is a prism through which the overwhelming abyss of the environment is focused into a piece of information palatable to the system.

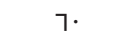
Depending on the direction of translation's shuttling 'goods'—whether it is from the system into the environment or from the environment into the system, experience and action are to be distinguished. If the direction is from the environment into the system, that is, a meaning selection of options, provided by translation, is attributed to the environment, what happens is described as the system's experience. If the direction is from the system into the environment, then we deal with the system's action (Luhmann 1995, 84). The system either experiences or acts in relation to its environment. Neither is possible for the system without its involvement with the environment: both sides of the form are needed. Translation is the point where the two sides meet and become able to interact and influence each other, regardless in which direction the influence flows. Within translation, the environment may cause the system to have an experience; within translation, the system can act on the environment.

## 10.3. CONDENSATION, OR AN ILLUSION OF TRANSLATION

The inspiration for this and the next section is once again provided by Spencer Brown's *Laws of Form*, more specifically by the two axioms of his calculus of indications. The first of the axioms helps to see better what *au fond* translation does; the second, how it moves.

Axiom 1 is the law of calling. It reads as follows: the value of a repeated call is the value of the original call. That is, if a name, after being called,

is repeated, its value does not change: "the value indicated by the two calls taken together is the value indicated by one of them. That is to say, for any name, to recall is to call" (Spencer Brown 1973, 1). Graphically a name is a cross:



The expressions of the same value are called equivalent, the equivalence is marked with the '=' sign:

This form is called the form of condensation.

This axiom describes fundamentally what translation aspires to accomplish. Whenever, it renders a name, as we have seen, it operates in the mode of the equation, equating the two sides of the form. Yet the trick is that the original name and a variant of the name are never the same, even if the same name is reproduced exactly as it was on the other side, it inevitably changes its value by virtue of the changed context of its reproduction (space- and time-wise). Thus, A inevitably becomes B on the other side of the form, and, strictly speaking, B cannot be equal to A. Translation, however, tries to create an illusion that what it does is recalling the same name, rather than calling a different name. In Spencer Brown's terminology, translation aspires to accomplish condensation, when two different names are passed off as recalling of the same name. Whether translation takes a stance of visibility or invisibility, it operates in the mode of equation, undertaking to express the same value in the medium of the other side of the form. Ultimately all translations, whether visible or invisible, assuming in/visibility with regard to their originals on the one hand and the target system on the other, aspire and claim to create a condensation—to present a different calling as recalling. Indeed, creating this illusion is how we can theorize the principal social-systemic function of translation: it helps to unite the two sides of the form, yet it has to negotiate its way between the two extremes—(1) obliterating the difference between the sides all together and (2) making alter too different from ego, endangering alter's intelligibility for ego.

The radical feminist translation in Québec in the 1970s which 'hijacked' its original (Flotow 1991), however, seems to contradict the principle described above in that it made translated texts different from their originals. Yet this translation acted within the form of its political/social agenda—'feminine/non-feminine text'. As Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood explained:

> My translation practice is a political activity aimed at making language speak for women. So my signature on a translation means: this

> translation has used every possible translation strategy to make the feminine visible in language. Because making the feminine visible in language means making women seen and heard in the real world. Which is what feminism is all about. (qtd. in Flotow 1991, 79)

The feminist translation "ideologically correct[ed] (i.e. feminiz[ed])" their originals (ibid., 78). Translation reclaimed the original to the side 'feminism' of the form 'feminism/patriarchy', where, in the opinion of the translator, the original should be. It is within this form that translation is a recalling which posits itself the same as calling, i.e., translation = original.

## 10.4. THE WAY OF ALL TRANSLATION

The second axiom, the law of crossing, reads as follows: "The value of a crossing made again is not the value of the crossing" (Spencer Brown 1973, 2). This means that if the intention is to cross a boundary and then to make another cross, the value of the two crosses put together is the value indicated by none of them. In other words, to recross is not the same as to cross:

$$\urcorner\!\lrcorner = \cdot$$

This axiom of the calculus of indications may be interpreted as the 'itinerary' of translation in the form: it crosses the boundary from one side to the other, yet it does not stay on the other side, it returns to the first side. Its crossing is always for recrossing. In this sense, translation presents its crossing as not crossing. Translation presents the absence of the same value of the crossings as the absence of crossing.

When translation returns, it brings something new: its function is to make the system (the first side) sensitive to the environment (the other side). The new that translation brings from the other side of the boundary is some (new) information about the other side. Yet there is a paradox. Translation's crossing is recrossing if we see it only as the first side's representative: A crosses the boundary but then recrosses it back. A remains A. But the recrossing brings an element of B which becomes part of A. For the B part of A, crossing the boundary is not recrossing, but the first crossing. Thus for translation as the representative of A—or, put differently, for the returning A part of A—the recrossing annihilates the first crossing. But for the new part brought from the other side—the B part of the 'A/B' transfer—there is only one crossing (according to the law of calling).

To resolve this paradox, translation creates an illusion of the total recrossing, to this or that extent hiding the crossing part of every recrossing. Once again, it has to negotiate between the Scylla and Charybdes—between the law of crossing, on the one hand, and the law of calling,

on the other. If pressed for explanations, translation has to divulge its secrets. In fact, this is what translation theory does, or put differently, what translation does on the second-level of observation: translation explains what it does on the first level of observation. But translation does this only if pressed for explanations, the first side of the form does not necessarily have or is interested to know the complexity of the relationship into which translation brings this side with the other when recrossing the boundary back.

## 10.5. SUPER-FORM

Another aspect of translation's existence in the form is that translation is the way to bring out the super-form of the form (Luhmann 1997, 62). The form is shown by translation to be the opposition of the form's two sides; but the form can be observed in its opposition to everything else. In such case, the opposition of the form is opposed to all the rest—to the world (see Sections 10.1 and 8.3). We can recast the discussion of medium and form in terms of an infinite concatenation of forms and super-forms. Indeed, the form 'meaning vs. non-meaning' is also a super-form for its sides. We have considered one of the sides—'meaning' which contains the form 'mediation vs. non-mediation'. But the form 'mediation vs. non-mediation', in turn, is a super-form for other forms, for instance 'mediation' was shown to contain 'translation vs. non-translation' (i.e., other types of mediation). 'Translation' is a super-form for so many well-known and well-studied forms ('literary translation/non-literary', 'literal translation/free or non-literal', 'medical/non-medical', 'legal/non-legal', etc.) and is open for any number of new/other forms.

The movement back and forth between super-forms and forms can be seen as an outline of the description of translation, but in order to move between these forms and super-forms with regard to translation, one also needs translation. Translation is as indispensable between forms and super-forms as it is between sides of forms, because uniting forms into super-forms or distinguishing them requires re-entry. The mechanism of re-entry and self-reference, the essence of all translation, is always at work: re-entry becomes the locus where Form A commissions B to go to the other side (C). Thus in B, A refers to itself by juxtaposing itself with the other: B = A/C, where B is a translating agent and a boundary phenomenon of A.

Also, in the present study, how translation in society is considered is a movement from form to super-form. Part I was on translation as a system, that is, there, internal oppositions (forms) within translation as super-form are considered. In Part II, translation as a system or form with its internal structures is shown in its opposition to everything else, that is, within a super-form.

## 10.6. COSMOPOLITE

> Two hands clap and there is a sound. What is the sound of one hand?
>
> —Hakuin Ekaku

> I am not an Athenian or a Greek, but a citizen of the world.
>
> —Socrates

Translation is a highly dynamic social-systemic phenomenon. It moves freely in the form and between the form and super-form. Translation lives in the world and thrives on crossing boundaries. From the observer's viewpoint, the world is the unity of the difference between the system and the environment (Luhmann 1995, 70ff.; Baraldi, Corsi, and Esposito 1997, 205–7). The world is the unity of any difference that is made by the observer; that is why the world cannot be observed as a unity. The world is a blind spot of every observer, because in order to observe the world, one has to drop any difference and, thereby, stop observing and just contemplate without differentiating—with an empty gaze. To observe the world means to drop the duality comparable to the famous Japanese koan ascribed to Hakuin Ekaku who asked what the sound of one hand clapping would be. Indeed, whenever we look at things or speak about something, we operate in what Spencer Brown showed as the two-sided form with at least one difference introduced as a separating line between an object and all the rest. Observing the world would mean dropping any differences and differentiations.

In European tradition, the world was viewed as the sum total of all things visible and invisible—*universitas rerum* or *aggregatio corporum*. In modernity, the concept of 'things' is replaced by the concept of the uncertainty and inexhaustibility of meaning, which is conceptualized as a horizon:

> [ . . . ] the world has the same inevitability and unnegatability as meaning. Any attempt to go beyond it conceptually only extends it; any such attempt would have to enlist meaning and the world and thus would be what it was trying not to be. (Luhmann 1995, 69)

The world is the unity of past and future, of the observer and the observed, of ego and alter. The world is a form-less correlate of the operations that take place in it. In this sense, the world is also a form, and, therefore, it implies transfer: the unity can be attained only by overcoming the boundary, the cross of the form. Crossing the boundary implies translation, because crossing is not simply going across but carrying something from one side into the other and looking for the common ground based on

which the two things are different. This means we are looking for the unity of the difference. This is a fundamental aspect of translation's social functioning. Translation identifies uniting differences or differentiating unities. This is the root of its bi-polar functioning as the systemic closing/opening boundary phenomenon. Translation is like double-faced Janus looking in the opposite directions—joining and disjoining. It is both '+' and '-'. This is the antonymic nature of translation.

In Spencer Brown's terms, the world can be presented as the unmarked space, which is separated by a difference into two parts—internal and external. Observation can operate only in the world with an introduced difference. The difference and the form it generates make something visible, reify something otherwise indistinguishable. Yet at the same time, the difference hides the unity of the difference. In its uniting aspect, translation reunites the space of the world and sublates the difference by pointing to the unity of the difference. Translation functions astraddle the cross of the form. In this sense, translation, while belonging to the commissioning system, lives in the world. That is what the title of this section stresses: translation is a 'cosmopolite' in the systemic world. An echo of this status of translation is heard in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's paradox: "The verbal text is jealous of its linguistic signature but impatient of national identity. Translation flourishes by virtue of that paradox" (2003, 9). The essence of the paradox can be traced to the fact that translation thrives on its cosmopolitanism, whether we talk about translation between notions, concepts, languages, cultures, or intersemiotic translation.

# Conclusion

In the present study, translation has been considered as a social phenomenon in the light of Niklas Luhmann's Social Systems Theory. In this closing part of my study, I will draw conclusions and propose some lines of research of social involvements of translation.

## TELLING THE FIRST HALF OF THE STORY

> L'histoire. Elle commence. Elle a commencé avant [ . . . ] le movement de la mer [ . . . ]
>
> —Marguerite Duras. *L'amour*

What is it exactly that Luhmann's SST helps us see as regards the theory of translation, its nature, its properties, its social praxis? To answer this question, one needs to step back and look in a fresh way at what we tend to take for granted about translation. Without asking naïve questions, we remain naïve. Luhmann's theoretical approach is a sort of *naïveté* in order to go further: he asks basic questions about things which are often taken for granted. Such approach frees the way for critical reassessment of our view of reality around us or the degree to which we can claim to see the reality. In terms of ANT, Luhmann acts as a spokesman: he does not say "anything more than what is inscribed" in phenomena under investigation, "but without him inscriptions speak considerably less!" (Latour 1987, 71).[1] Without SST we would not be able or, at least we have not been able, to see certain things about translation or, even if we have seen them, they were detached from their social and systemic context. Luhmann's *naïveté* is reminiscent of how Mark Engel described the method of Gregory Bateson:

> [W]e create the world that we perceive, not because there is no reality outside our heads [ . . . ] but because we select and edit the reality we see to conform to our beliefs about what sort of world we live in.

> [ . . . ] For a man to change his basic, perception-determining beliefs—what Bateson calls his epistemological premises—he must first become aware that reality is not necessarily as he believes it to be. (In Bateson 1972, vii)

SST allows us to pose a few questions which have gone not only unanswered but also unasked. The most fundamental questions are the following:

1. How is translation possible, i.e., how is the improbability of connecting two (or more) different phenomena/parties made probable?
2. What is the basis upon which different social activities, categorized as translational, are lumped together? What is translation's contribution to making the improbability of social order probable?

This type of questions comes from the fundamental principle that chaos is probable and order improbable. Yet under certain circumstances order emerges out of chaos. Out of the 'primeval soup' of all sorts of social activities, translation as a distinct name meaning a distinct type of social activity emerges. How? To answer the question '*how?*' is to answer two questions:

3. What are the internal mechanisms that made/make translation possible?
4. What is translation for?

Question 3 refers us to the internal structure of the activity and its nature (set of properties producing certain results). Question 4 brings us out of the phenomenon of translation into a larger domain of which it is a part among many parts, a part of a more complex structure. What is the function of translation in this overall structure? To answer this question is to define translation as a social activity.

Luhmann's SST provides us with the apparatus for posing these fundamental questions and suggesting answers to them. It is always difficult to ask the simplest questions in a world of so many established traditions, approaches, and paradigms of thought. It is as difficult to answer them. Spencer Brown asked such a simple question: What are the most fundamental forms of all human categorization? Mathematics' capacity of describing such fundamentals had been known, "[b]ut mathematical texts generally [began] the story somewhere in the middle, leaving the reader to pick up the thread as best he can" (Spencer Brown 1973, v). Spencer Brown endeavored to begin at the beginning. By borrowing Spencer Brown's laws of form, Luhmann helps us begin at the beginning of all things social.

Maturana and Varela asked another basic question: What is the difference between living and non-living things? This is one of the most daunting or "cursed" questions, to borrow Fedor Dostoevskii's epithet for this type of problems. Maturana and Varela's answer was that the difference

between the living and non-living systems is autopoiesis. Luhmann makes a step further and helps us see society as such a system which (re)produces itself out of itself. He also points to the possibility of applying these concepts to all social phenomena, including translation.

Luhmann's SST not only allows us to pose fundamental questions about translation, but it also supplies us with conceptual apparatus enabling us to answer at least some of these questions. The entire present study can be summarized by the four questions formulated above. Questions 1 and 3 are the focus of Part I (although the way for answering the other questions was already paved there). Luhmann's SST makes this possible with such concepts as system vs. environment, allo- vs. autopoietic systems with corresponding criteria. Translation was shown to be an autopoietic system, self-bounding, self-generating, and self-perpetuating (Section 1.6). SST allowed us to see the nature of translation as a translational communication event (Chapter 2). Translation's nature is that of mediation (Section 2.3). Translation was shown to observe itself at two levels—observation of operations and observation of observations (Chapter 3). Translation is a system operating in the medium of meaning, producing a limitless variety of forms (Chapter 4). It was stressed that in order to define translation, one has to define a distinction. I concluded the consideration of translation as a system with the chapter on translation's code and programs, the former enabling translation observe its difference from other phenomena and operations and the latter ensuring translation's flexibility in its observations (Chapter 5).

Part II presents answers to Questions 2 and 4 (although, once again, it clarifies and deepens answers to Questions 1 and 3 as well). Translation is considered in Part II in its social context, as one of the social subsystems. Luhmann's SST helps us see and theorize translation as a social catalyst (Chapter 6) and a boundary phenomenon (Chapter 7). Luhmann's theory of social evolution provides a basis for seeing what part translation plays at each stage of social evolutionary cycle—variation, selection, and stabilization (Chapter 8). Translation does not lord it over in society; it exercises its function of the mediator of social communication and interaction in structural couplings with other systems, notably the subsystem of politics (Chapter 9 and Section 2.6). Finally, in Chapter 10, drawing on Spencer Brown's laws of form, I showed translation's behavior within form and super-form—its directionality and its carrying influence from one side to the other and beyond.

Luhmann's SST helps show translation in its social-systemic involvements and its place in the society (the boundary phenomenon). SST provides the conceptual apparatus enabling us to demonstrate translation's own systemics, its dynamics both within itself qua system and in the context of the overall social system—its internal and external dynamics. The main feature that characterizes translation in this respect is its constant going out of the marked space and coming back and re-entries which it generates. Translation is shown to be equidistant between identity and difference (to

use Joachim Renn's expression), operating in the two-sided form: it joins the two sides and, at the same time, keeps them apart.

Luhmann's SST as a theory capable of describing itself as its own object of study is helpful in yet another respect. There is a difference between asymmetrical theories and circular, self-referential theories. A universal theory, which SST claims to be, contemplates its objects inside its own self-referentiality. It includes the observer and the tools of observation into the observation itself. In this respect, there is another radical rupture of Luhmann's theory and European traditional science which studied objects from outside, *ab extra*. The external observers may change, but the object is still the object and the subject is the subject. SST and other circular theories claim that a richer description of reality is possible only when the observer observes him/herself, when the line between subject and object is relativized (Luhmann 1987, 164; 1997, 16). When applied to TS, this principle helps us see the observation within translation on two levels—first-order and second-order observations, and, moreover, consider the theoretical approach that describes this state of affairs as a second-order observation itself. Thereby the observer realizes that her/his observation is only one of many possible observations and that, in order to enrich his/her vision, s/he should take into account other possible and actualized observations.

This provides us with a very convenient passage to the final section where I am going to touch upon other sociological theories which may be of use in TS. But before I do this, I would like to consider some pros and contras of Luhmann's SST.

## LUHMANN: PRO AND CONTRA

In order to understand the importance of multi-faceted and inclusive studies of social aspects of translation, it is necessary to emphasize again that no one single sociological theory can possibly address social issues in all their complexity. For example, John Parber, standing on what he calls "realist" positions, argues that social theory has to embrace the levels of individuals, nature, culture, action and social structure (2003). He seems to outline well the major components of a fuller social theory.

In Parber's list, Luhmann's SST falls under the category of theories focusing on social structure. Although Luhmann would have probably raised his eyebrows when he had seen that his theory studied only social structure. Indeed, he disagreed point blank that "action and system are incompatible paradigms" (cf. 2009, 19). His SST has its goals and priorities which are not always fully understood or appreciated, and this has led to unjust reproaches. Answering some of criticisms, Luhmann rightly distinguished between critical approaches of two kinds. In arts criticism, the goal is the critic's contribution to finding the best art forms. In sciences, unfortunately, criticism is not

always as constructive (Luhmann 1992, 371). Still, in what follows, a brief overview of the major lines of criticism of SST is presented, if only to prevent reproaches in arrogant or cowardly brushing all criticisms aside.

In the following discussion of pros and contras of the application of SST to social sciences I will largely draw on the summary presented in Krause (1996, 69–73), however, re-grouping the arguments and adding, where deemed necessary, other points of view and Luhmann's own statements. I will also characterize the situation with regard to the reception of Luhmann's theory in TS.

Detlef Krause starts with the epistemological value of SST. Luhmann's stance helps gain insight into social phenomena by viewing them from a farther-reaching perspective, taking leave of traditional rationality and dethroning authorities and blind traditionalism. By conceptualizing open closure and differentiated uniformity, SST estranges the observer from his/her own observation and thereby de-objectivizes (observations of) reality. This is how Luhmann carries out his ambitious program of *Abklärung von Aufklärung* (a clarification of the enlightenment).

Luhmann's is an ironical spirit, prompting a distance from studied objects (Reese-Schäfer 1999, 145; Nassehi 2008, 10–1) and paradoxicalization—making the illogical logical and the logical illogical. Luhmann's epistemology renounces final truths by insisting on intrinsically socialized observation and opting for open theoretical universalism. Such stance allows Luhmann to free his theorizing from tradition-imposed dogmas and self-imposed finality of discoveries. Indeed, when one reads later pieces of Luhmann's prolific output, one appreciates ever new vistas opening even when the discussed aspects seem to have been exhausted in his previous works. Luhmann's thought is devoid of over-intentionalization, it flows freely and always keeps an eye on unfolding new horizons. We have already seen SST's radical rupture with (over-)moralizing social research and old European humanist traditions which he finds no longer precise enough to account for accumulated knowledge about the nature of the social (e.g., as opposed to the psychological).

Society is demystified under Luhmann's scalpel-sharp and meticulous dissecting of social 'tissues' and his unraveling mysteries of the invisible (although it may be argued that such demystifying observation cannot do away with all layers, retaining its hyaline nature, of seeing not only *things*, but also *through* things—Brighenti 2010, 13, 69). Luhmann also de-ideologizes social theory, by freeing himself from all political agendas. Sometimes, however, his de-ideologization is viewed as nonetheless catering for social conservatism (see below).

Luhmann's scholarly discourse is imbued with experimenting and impressive thematic diversity. His tackling of problems has something in common with shock therapy. Yet however painful the treatment may be, it results in inspiring freshness of discovering something that just a moment ago seemed so mundane, trite, and time-worn beyond repair.

Let us turn to what has been seen as shortcomings of Luhmann's SST. On the most general level, Luhmann is blamed for the social conservatism, because his theory is said to be a new form of the ideology aimed at stabilizing the status quo of power distribution. Related to this, there is another criticism leveled at Luhmann's systems rationality as regards complexity reduction through the mechanism of meaning (*Sinn*) and its autopoiesis. The system reduces the complexity of its environment according to its own logic, and in postulating such state of affairs, SST allegedly ignores individual social efforts and contributions (Kiss 1990, 101–13). Such criticisms, however, are irrelevant to SST. It is an axiom that no theory can or claims to embrace all aspects of a studied domain. Rather, only those aspects which are viewed as the most crucial for explicating this or that particular facet of the domain are abstracted for description. SST attempts to see social phenomena as resultants, combined effects of many social component vectors. Moreover, Luhmann tries to formulate the most general and fundamental social laws. Individually, vectors impress us as endowed with enough strength and decision-making and decision-influencing capacities, yet it appears to be less so as we move to the observation of social results on a larger scale abstracted from each individual vector's zone of influence. At this level, we observe that, although some individual vectors have a decisive influence, the resultant assumes the form of a 'give-and-take' interaction, even under the most authoritarian social circumstances. Gábor Kiss seems to be closer to striking a balance between individualistic and system-generalizing approaches when he suggests to consider Luhmann's approach as a statement of the necessity of social selection (the reduction of complexity), whereas, on a practical side, such selection should also (Kiss uses the adverb "always") be observed on the level of concrete historical moments, on the level of social and subjective histories (Kiss 1990, 106). When introducing his theoretical, yet at the same time practice-in-mind explication of holistic change in complex social and organizational settings, Danny Burns agrees that effective systemic approach is to be underpinned by in-depth inquiries across a wide terrain, yet it offers a scaffolding "architecture" for understanding social processes (2007, 1). Luhmann opts for a more generalized presentation of the social, which does not preclude us from exploring small-scale aspects. In general, the discussed type of criticism seems to be, although not devoid of a considerable clarifying constructive value, nourished by political and ideological motivations.

Luhmann has been criticized for unjustified extrapolation of concepts borrowed from natural sciences, notably the key concept with which he theorizes society—autopoiesis, to the social domain (Stark 1994). Yet Luhmann explained that well before him, sociology turned to biology in order to clarify the fundamental issue of identity (2009, 15). A living organism's identity is seen in that the organism reproduces itself out of itself, whereas death ends this process. This notion was applied to social research to clarify the problem of social identity. Yet it was not made

blindly. Luhmann explains that in sociology the problem of social system's identity can hardly be as clearly definable and there is no outward observer with a final say. A social system itself defines its identity over the course of history; for example, it itself decides whether what was before, in the past, is still its own self or it was a different system. Luhmann continues this line of research and describes the process of social-systemic self-identification in terms of autopoiesis. Luhmann, however, clearly distinguishes between different types of autopoiesis—in biological, psychic, or social systems. His application of biological concepts, as well as concepts borrowed from other sciences, is provided with sound and convincing argumentation.

Luhmann is blamed for not clearly defining what systems are and to what level of systemic formations the concept of autopoiesis is applicable. Daniel Barben traces this alleged lack of clarity back to the corresponding biological concept which can be applied both/either to cells, and/or organisms, and/or populations, and/or evolutionary processes (1996, 228). Yet this is the nature of generalized (macro)theories. They try to capture universal laws. Luhmann theorizes social systems as ranging from interpersonal communication (conversations) through the institutional level (organizations) to macro-social formations (nations, international formations or even the world society in general—1995, 410, 430; 1997, 145–71). Critics view this as a drawback of SST, but this may be interpreted as the system's versatility.

Flying too high in the sky (as opposed to returning back to earth, to create a down-to-earth theory) is another reproach (Krause 1996, 69–70; cf. Nassehi 2008, 3–4). More concrete studies are indeed desirable, and this is how Luhmann saw the dynamic of further studies within the systems-theoretical paradigm. In the opening lecture of the introductory course on SST, Luhmann stated clearly that relatively abstract theoretical concepts should be translated into concrete research projects (Luhmann 2009, 12). This is a characteristic feature of all macrotheories. When accused of what was seen by some as over-generalizing reductionism, Edward O. Wilson, a creator of sociobiological theory, explained that such criticisms are rooted in misunderstanding of how science works. He distinguished between two stages in theory building. The first one is when one scientist, a "systems builder," endeavors to explicate a large pool of information with a more economical theoretical package than was done before. The second stage is fine-tuning and enriching the suggested theoretical pattern with fine-tuning studies (in Wright 1991, 160).

Luhmann was also criticized for expelling human beings from his theorizing of society. Once again, this reproach is based on sheer misunderstanding and not taking proper heed to ample explanations given by Luhmann himself. Human beings are by no means considered in SST as less important than traditionally, let alone chased away (Luhmann 1995, 212). The problem is that critics do not see that Luhmann argues for a more precise way of theorizing society, considering human beings as a locus of

interaction of biological, psychic, and social systems, observed from the viewpoint of social action (Luhmann 2009, 31). Each of these systems should be the focus of attention of different sciences—biology, psychology, and sociology, respectively. Interdisciplinary approaches are well possible, indeed desirable, yet the researcher should be perfectly clear what is studied and with what conceptual apparatus. Confusion, even if sanctified by tradition, will no longer do.

Another typical complaint about Luhmann concerns itself with his writing style. The latter is said to be user- and reader-unfriendly. Luhmann admits that his writings are not easy reading (as they were not easy writing, either—1995, li). Yet he argues that "abstraction is an epistemological necessity," that abstraction should not be mistaken for "pure artistry"; abstraction is seen by him to be unavoidable when the theory attains a degree of complexity which defies easy and linear rendering. Such complex theory is "not primarily concerned with harmonizing the forms of theory and presentation" (Luhmann 1995, l–li). How else can one theorize meaning (*Sinn*), when every effort is made to define meaning in a most abstract, universalist way; when one tries to avoid conceptually simplistic approaches; and when, paradoxically, claims of clarity are seen as (mis)leading to unclarity (Krause 1996, 73)?

My brief survey of the repertoire of criticisms does not claim to be exhaustive, but it presents the major concerns voiced with regard to SST. In general, one has to agree with Detlef Krause that the majority of criticisms smack of irritation and, at most, suggest alternative views rather than counter-arguments (Krause 1996, 72). The overall balance of pros vs. contras, according to Krause, is definitely in favor of Luhmann: the arguments against Luhmann's theory fall significantly short of the force of the arguments for it (Krause 1996, 65).

Admittedly, in TS, reluctance to accept Luhmann's SST is not so highbrow. Mostly Luhmann is considered either too difficult to understand, let alone apply, or, being only half-understood, he is caricatured as a sociologist whose theory has only one distinct feature—there are no people in it. TS still suffers from a sort of inferiority complex inherited from translation as profession and from still memorable, if not continuing, pain caused by the pangs of birth as a full-fledged scholarly discipline. Therefore, on the one hand, fighting a battle for translators and for translator*esse*s and, on the other hand, becoming suspicious every time when verbal translation is questioned as the focus of its attention, TS is not fully assured whether to welcome Luhmann's theory, with which even sociologists do not seem to be quite comfortable, or be content with a more palatable sociological *table d'hôte*. Insufficient knowledge of and little motivation for studying Luhmann's SST do not allow translation students to mete out a well-informed judgment. The opinion is based on retold versions of Luhmann's SST and prompted by the reluctance of ingrained humanist traditionalism with its anthropological pathos (cf. the problems of accepting macrotheories by

scholarly communities discussed in the Introduction). Incidentally, this seems to be true as far as other sociological theories adopted in TS are concerned. That is why more in-depth studies of modern sociological theory are absolutely vital, if we do not want the so-called sociological turn to be little more than a fad.

## "BOTH . . . AND," OR BEWARE OF COMPARISONS?

> Seid umschlungen, Millionen!
>
> —Friedrich von Schiller

> [ . . . ] The holy trinity of Marx, Durkheim and Weber [and] additions to the sainthood like Simmel [ . . . ]
>
> —Christopher G. A. Bryant and David Jary

Having said that sociological aspects of translation should be studied on a complementary and inclusive basis, I conclude by placing Luhmann's social systems theory in the context of other modern sociological theories, some of which, such as Bourdieu's theory of social fields, Latour's actor-network theory, Habermas's theory of communicative action, figure, to this or that extent, in contemporary TS sociological research, some do not. Application of as many contemporary sociological theories as possible would definitely enrich translation studies, because they would provide us with a well-developed theoretical and conceptual apparatus to better account for translation as a social phenomenon. There have been few full-scale, book-size applications of any one sociological theory in TS. TS applications rarely go beyond articles (or edited collections, such as Inghilleri 2005, with mostly case studies and application of individual concepts, rather than of an entire theoretical paradigm) or book chapters. Practical applications of one particular theory to translation, such as Sapiro (2008), are also exceptionally rare, and they cannot replace full-blown theoretical works aimed at exploring a sociological theory in its entirety with regard to its applicability to TS (for example, Bourdieu's theory of social fields or Habermas's theory of communicative action). To state the necessity to turn to a deeper sociological research, when and if we aspire to fathom social involvements of translation within the so-called sociological turn in TS, is to state the obvious, yet something which still awaits its fulfillment.

Andrew Chesterman, advocating the application of ANT to TS, was right when he wrote:

> Some theoretical frameworks have been proposed for the analysis of some of the relevant sociological issues. However, their application has remained limited, and many areas are relatively neglected

> or undertheorized. These include research on team translation and teamwork revision processes, co-editing, institutional multilingual document production, translator-client relations, translation policy, translator networks, translators' use of technical and other resources, translator status and mobility, the discourse of translation, and accreditation systems. (In Duarte, Rosa, and Seruya 2006, 9.)

In-depth studies of at least the most prominent and the most promising sociological theories are desperately needed in order to overcome the existing patchiness and superficiality of present-day studies of translation as a social phenomenon.

The research should be both intensive and extensive: (1) we should encompass more of the existing modern theoretical sociological thought and (2) we should go deeper into each one of them.

As for the first aspect, Ihlen, van Ruler, and Fredriksson (2009) provide a good example of the spectrum of possible research in order for sociologically informed TS to benefit from modern sociology. Ihlen, van Ruler, and Fredriksson (2009) is an edited collection of articles outlining the application of several sociological theories to the study of public relations. Each theory considers a particular angle, and together they contribute to a better understanding of the social. Some of these theoretical approaches may be inspiring for translation students as well. Some of the theorists listed below are more or less known in TS, yet it may still be interesting to see the angle of the application of their works in public relations and, perhaps, learn from the suggested versatility. Some of the theoretical approaches deal with larger social contexts, as for instance Anthony Giddens's research is instrumental in describing a sociohistorical context of social activities and also elaborating a 'third' way perspective, negotiating a compromise between extremes in the social domain. Latour and Callon's actor-network theory concentrates on social network-building and individual agents' acting in such networks, a special emphasis being laid on constructing reality by a complex interaction between different parties of the network. Social networking is also at the center of Robert Putnam's scholarly interests, yet he considers networking in terms of the concept of social capital and as a manifestation of communal sensibility and benefits. Luhmann's social systems theory is viewed as a way to theorize a social system in a larger social context—a unit among many others. Erving Goffman's theory of interpersonal relations with its focus on self-positioning and interpreting other agents' positions in social interaction provides helpful insights for the sociological study of individual agents. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's post-colonial theory deals with the politics of representation; it also discusses emancipatory goals on the level of corporations, nation-states, and global structures. Spivak is also interested in power distribution, and this issue leads onto the stage a bevy of other theories focused on the study of power, such as Michel Foucault's and Pierre Bourdieu's. Such and some other theories consider the

social domain not so much in its globality as in its particular facets. The now classical social theory of Max Weber discusses problems of legitimacy and legitimation. Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann investigate the phenomenon of crisis as an interaction of subjective and objective factors. An important contribution to Ihlen, van Ruler, and Fredriksson (2009) is an article on Dorothy Smith's research exploring women's role in the social domain. Several theories contribute valuable insights into various aspects of social ethics, among the sociologists who consider this aspect are Ulrich Beck, Leon Mayhew, and Jürgen Habermas. To emphasize, this list cannot (and does not) claim to be exhaustive. The goal was to provide an example of integrating different theoretical approaches and to explore the applicability of some of the most well elaborated directions of sociological research to adjacent disciplines within the humanities.

It would be wrong to say that TS has not made some progress in the direction of extensification of its scope of research, yet by and large, there is more of good intentions rather than of their fulfillment. Chesterman maps out three main regions of translation students' "spatial" context—cultural context, sociological context, and cognitive context. The sociological one is further divided into the sociology of translations as products, the sociology of translators and the sociology of translating, i.e., the translation process, and Chesterman remarks that the third (the sociology of translating) has been the least studied (Duarte, Rosa, and Seruya 2006, 12). Exploring these different directions requires an in-depth investigation of the potential of different individual theories for TS as well as the potential of their combinations. So far, we find ideas but rarely a follow-up full-scale investigation.

For instance, touching upon Anthony Giddens's theory of globalizing modernity with regard to translation, Esperança Bielsa suggests "to investigate more closely how the main means for the transmission of written information in modernity, print and electronic transmission, shape specific forms of disembedded social relations" (2005, 143). No doubt, it is also worth exploring Giddens's theory of structuration of society with its emphasis on the overcoming subject/object dualism and rather turning it into a duality relationship:

> [A] fundamental concept of structuration theory—that of *routinization*. [ . . . ] The repetitiveness of activities which are undertaken in like manner day after day is the material grounding of what I call the recursive nature of social life. (By its recursive nature I mean that the structured properties of social activity—via the duality of structure [vs. dualism of objectivism/subjectivism, where the object is society and the subject—the knowledgeable human agent]—are constantly recreated out of the very resources which constitute them.) (1984, xxiii)

Yet so far, there have been no full-scale attempts to conduct studies of Giddens's theory and its potential for TS.

Andrew Chesterman proposes Norman Fairclough's investigations on discourse "as a potentially useful model for the analysis of some aspects of translation practice" (Duarte, Rosa, and Seruya 2006, 15). Fairclough's detailed theory of discourse, building on the work of Antonio Gramsci, Louis Althusser, Michel Foucault, and Antony Giddens, emphasizing changes in language use as they are linked to wider social and cultural processes, may indeed be very useful and inspiring for TS (Fairclough 1992, 1, 5). Moreover, Fairclough provides further links to other theoretical approaches of great potential to the study of social aspects of discourse: Jürgen Habermas's theory of communicative action; Dale Spender's study of discourse with regard to gender issues (1980); Teun A. van Dijk's research in mass media-related discourse; J. M. Atkinson and J. Heritage's edited collection *Structures of Social Action* (1984), a "social research which takes conversation as its data" and which, for instance, may provide further inspiration for studying community interpreting (Fairclough 1992, 6). Yet, again, no full-scale fulfillment of the suggested research exists.

From individual sociological theories potentially interesting for TS, I pass on to the question of combinability of theories. The combinability of sociological theories, such as Luhmann's SST and Bourdieu's theory of social fields, is not infrequently questioned by translation students. Superficial acquaintance with such theories often precludes seeing their deeper connecting points. As a result, not only compatibility is denied, but different theories—not just those of Luhmann and Bourdieu—are not even properly juxtaposed in order to see more clearly their different potentials. Yet comparing theories is not only possible but also necessary; it is an important feature of any scholarly field, and sociology is no exception. Comparison allows clearer delimitations of theories and, at the same time, enriches our understanding of important sociological notions (see for example Wimmer 1998; Stäheli 2000; Field 2003). While comparing theories, we may discover that they are not only comparable but also compatible—at least in some of their aspects.

Let us consider the notion *capital* as an example. In Field (2003), the use of the notion is analyzed in the theories of Bourdieu and James Coleman, an eminent American sociologist of the twentieth century. Despite obvious differences in the interpretation of the notion by the two scholars and their open confrontation, John Field considers it "instructive to compare Coleman's contribution with Bourdieu's" (p. 28). Field is aware of differences between the two approaches. He recounts how in 1989, at a conference on social theory in Chicago, Coleman and Bourdieu confronted one another's positions, with Coleman advocating the engagement with the problems of constructed social organization and Bourdieu defending a humanist view of sociology with reflexive social practice. The disagreements were also in the treatment of the notion *social capital*. Bourdieu's interpretation was circular: privileged individuals connected

with other privileged people and in such way they maintain their position, that is, this is how they maintain and increase their social capital. Coleman discerned the value of social connections for all social actors, both individual and collective, both privileged and disadvantaged. Coleman's view was more optimistic, being socially open and encompassing; social capital, in his opinion, is largely benign in itself. Bourdieu ascribed only a dark side to the notion for those at the bottom of the social scale, leaving the bright side to the privileged, who are likely to continue enjoying their social status. Yet despite these differences, Field goes on to discover and look into similarities between the two theorists' approaches, such as that both see educational achievements as a source of the social capital or, at a deeper level, both view social interactions as exchange, whether leading to rational choice (Coleman) or constituting the basis for cultural materialism (Bourdieu). According to Field, there is an affinity between the two approaches on the 'negative' side: both Coleman and Bourdieu by and large ignore that personal sympathy between people or their disliking or hating each other should be factored in when talking about social connections; not everything is rationally calculated. Field also cites Piotr Sztompka who brought up yet another issue: rational choice theory does not take heed to individuals' disposition towards or bias against trusting others. As we see, neither open confrontation nor differences in general or particular issues do not prevent sociologists to juxtapose and compare Coleman's and Bourdieu's theories. One of the results is identifying 'missed spots' and mapping out new lines of research.

As for the intensification of TS research of the applicability of modern sociology to the study of translation, there is little doubt that we should favor pluralistic studies and renounce intellectual isolationism (Iheln, van Ruler, and Fredriksson 2009, 2). In other words, differences between different theories should not eclipse what these theories have in common and how they complement each other—in other words, balanced synthesizing approaches to sociology should inform translation studies.

For example, one may hear in TS that Bourdieu's concept of social fields is so different from Luhmann's social subsystems that no comparison is warranted. Such artificial isolationism comes from overcautious opinions, which can be explained not so much by concerns about eclecticism as by insufficient knowledge of individual theories and their distribution in the space of modern sociological theory. That is why here I would like to look into the matter in greater detail. In recent years, I have studied Bourdieu's and Luhmann's social theories as they apply to TS. I have heard a number of times that it is impossible to combine such different theories as the basis for one research: Luhmann's systems are allegedly so different that they are incompatible with Bourdieu's social fields. Yet, although they are different concepts and one should be careful not to underestimate the difference, they do have some important common features and are, therefore, juxtaposable, as Cornelia Bohn states:

> I see a similarity between [Bourdieu's] field theory as microsociological analysis of the horizontal differentiation of modern society and the concept of social operations contained in it, and Luhmann's theory of functional differentiation with its operational basis. With Luhmann, there are function systems and their symbolic world production; in Bourdieu's social theory, there are relatively autonomous fields which draw boundaries and create their domains of the social. Communications are operations, drawing boundaries of the social system; there are games in social fields which determine the latter's dynamics and self-imposed and constantly verified boundaries. Social systems are closed from their environments based on functionally specific codes; social fields' boundaries are drawn as a result of factual and social inclusions and exclusions. (in Colliot-Thélène, François und Gebauer 2005, 62–3)

Armin Nassehi and Gerd Nollmann agree and continue the list of points of rapprochement between SST and the theory of social fields:

> Similar to Luhmann, who ascribes operational autonomy and internal recursive connectivity to function systems, Bourdieu emphasizes logical autonomy of social fields, following their own "economy," rules and logic. One should be careful not to exaggerate similarities of [Bourdieu and Luhmann's] theoretical approaches, but, like Bourdieu, Luhmann also endeavors to define the conditions of praxis, which escape praxis itself. What Bourdieu demonstrates with the notions *habitus*, which the agent him/herself cannot determine, and *illusio*, Luhmann shows with the notion *blind spot* of all operations so that what happens, happens and, in the time of happening, remains opaque. (2004, 12–3)

In present-day TS, usually the emphasis is laid on differences between sociological theories, especially between such auteur theories as Luhmann's SST and Bourdieu's theory of social fields. Partly, this is the influence of the general tendency to look for idiosyncrasy and originality which primarily manifested itself in modern history in arts but later was extrapolated to other domains, sciences included: a scholar or a scientist is considered not only as a contributor to the common pool of knowledge but also as an original thinker or, otherwise, only a disciple/follower/imitator. No wonder scholars and scientists themselves have fallen victim to this tendency and try their best to delimit their 'turf' by making clear in what way their ideas are original and how what they say differ from their 'neighbors'. Giddens criticizes functionalism; Coleman and Bourdieu openly confront each other's position; Bourdieu and Luhmann brush each others' theories aside as not worth more than a derogatory remark. Yet this does not mean that all their theories or concepts are incompatible. In fact, sociologists themselves take the lead in demonstrating that the opposite is true. For instance, Joachim Renn bases his

theory on Luhmann's SST, Bourdieu's *Praxistheorie*, Habermas's sociological theory (2006, 22, 24). Famously, Habermas's theory of communicative action absorbs a number of Western European philosophical and sociological theories, even to the point of being criticized for eclecticism (1984; 1989a; Edgar 2006). Michel Callon points to where his ANT borders on Bourdieu's sociological theory (1989, 75, with reference to Bourdieu 1987) and Michel Foucault's theory of power (1986b, 230, with reference to Foucault 1976). Callon also uses the notion *coupling* which echoes Luhmann's notion of *structural coupling* (Callon 1989, 70). In his short yet brilliant study of Luhmann's SST, Armin Nassehi, among other things, shows how SST grows out of its intellectual context and cannot be fully appreciated without taking into consideration theories of Foucault, Derrida, sociologists of the *practice turn* which postulates reflexion-free social praxis or related paradigms, such as Garfinkel, Schatzki, and Bourdieu (2008, 13, 15 and passim).

Systemic approaches reign supreme in modern sociology. Anthony Giddens, despite his objections to functionalism and naturalism (applying notions of biological sciences to social phenomena), still theorizes society as an interplay of "internally highly integrated unities" (1984, xxvii). He proposes to consider unities between systems, such as "intersocietal systems" and "time-space edges," referring to "different aspects of regionalization which cut across social systems recognizably distinct as societies" (ibid., xxvii). All such systemic entities are shaped by what he terms "routinization," that is, repetitiveness of social activities (ibid., xxiii). In a later work (1990), Giddens speaks of abstract systems of modernity:

> Trust in abstract systems is the condition of time-space distanciation and the large areas of security in day-to-day life which modern institutions offer as compared to the traditional way. The routines which are integrated with abstract systems are central to ontological security in conditions of modernity (p. 113).

Erving Goffman writes that social establishments may be considered as relatively closed systems from five perspectives:

1. *Technical:* depending on their efficiency or inefficiency;
2. *Political:* in terms of mutual responsibilities between members and mechanisms of social control;
3. *Structural:* in terms of social horizontal-vertical groupings and their relations;
4. *Cultural:* in terms of ethical and moral issues;
5. *His own dramaturgical:* in terms of "the techniques of impression management employed in a given establishment, the principal problems of impression management in the establishment, and the identity and inter-relationships of the several performance teams which operate in the establishment" (1990, 232–3).

Yet Goffman continues, thereby stressing the combinability of different theories, that the facts utilized in each of the perspectives may also be considered as "a part in the matters that are a concern in all the other perspectives" (ibid., 233). Thus, whatever perspective we use, when describing social relations, does not exclude using the same facts for describing society from different perspectives. They are, in other words, complementary—not exclusive or isolationist. Arguably, the same can be said about using different perspectives and theories for describing social involvements of translation.

On the most general level, different sociological approaches may be put together in our attempt to shed more light on certain aspects of translational activities. For example, as Chesterman pointed out:

> [L]ike Bourdieu's model, Luhmann's too seems more applicable to the study of factors influencing translation and translators, and to the distribution of different kinds of translations in society, than to the translating process itself. (Duarte, Rosa, and Seruya 2006, 14)

One theory complements another. For example, ANT helps us concentrate on what is less developed in Luhmann's SST and concretize or break down several social processes which are not elaborated in SST in a detailed way:

1. the multi-staged process of translation (translating interests, translating the real world into representations, translating all the previous stages of fact-building into the final project);
2. structural couplings between different parts of the system, if we consider the created network as system, and its environment (which is composed of actors before their being translated and the world prior to its reduction to representations);
3. the genesis of the system (recruiting actors) and the role of translation in it (translation of the actors' interests and the fact-builders' interests into the final project);
4. a stronger emphasis on social processes; for example, knowledge is described not statically, "by itself or by opposition to 'ignorance' or to 'belief', but only by considering a whole cycle of accumulation" (Latour 1987, 220). Translation is also "a process before it is a result" (Callon 1986b, 224). How ANT theorizes translation as a process may also be enlightening for translation students;
5. the role of spokesperson is that of the mediator-translator between one party and another. ANT's theory of spokesperson's translating activities would, no doubt, enrich our understanding of the social function of the translator as well as the nature of translation;
6. all actors having their particular social backgrounds, links, more or less obvious interests, etc.

To emphasize one of the above points, the role of the spokesperson makes ANT very promising for TS, because the entire world is theorized in ANT

as observable only through the mediation of the spokesperson (Callon 1989, 15–22).

There are multitudes of other exciting aspects and promising lines of research in sociology and beyond, which await their TS researcher who would not complacently skate on the ice but will apply her/himself to serious studies of sociological theories. To emphasize, my study is only an invitation to such in-depth endeavors. Looking at new opening vistas of the sociologically informed research in TS, one might feel inspired like the sociobiologist Edward O. Wilson when he sat on the edge of a rain forest:

> The unsolved mysteries of the rain forest are formless and seductive. They are like unnamed islands hidden in the blank spaces of old maps, like dark shapes glimpsed descending the far wall of a reef into the abyss. They draw us forward and stir strange apprehensions. The unknown and prodigious are drugs to the scientific imagination, stirring insatiable hunger with a single taste. In our hearts we hope we will never discover everything. We pray there will always be a world like this one at whose edge I sat in darkness. (1992, 7)

# Notes

## NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION

1. Unless specified otherwise, all translations are mine.—*S.T.*
2. In Section 4.3.3, I will problematize this relationship *primary/secondary*.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER 1

1. Luhmann used the term "machines" in a narrower sense—as systems different from organisms, living systems, and social and psychic systems (1995, 2).

## NOTES TO CHAPTER 2

1. I think the adjective 'operational' should be used instead of 'operative' because what is meant here corresponds to the former meaning "of or engaged in or used for operations" whereas the meaning of 'operative' is "in operation; having effect" (*Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, 1998, OUP, 623). Cf. Kathleen Cross' translation who also opts for 'operational' (Luhmann 2000b).

## NOTES TO CHAPTER 4

1. For an interesting discussion of how the term *cultural translation* is used outside of TS, see "*Translation Studies* Forum: Cultural Translation" (in *Translation Studies*, Vol. 2, no. 2, 2009, 196–219).
2. To preclude any possibility of misunderstanding, it should be emphasized that the distinctions should be realistically applicable. It would be, of course, nonsensical to try to apply the distinction 'machine/non-machine translation' to a culture whose technological development has not reached a high enough level.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER 5

1. There are strange convergences in life.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER 7

1. From *Journey to Erzurum*, translated by David and Ludmila Matthews.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER 9

1. In this chapter, in all references to Lenin's works, the Roman number stands for the volume number in Lenin's *Complete Works* (see References), the Arabic numbers after the colon are pages.
2. Lenin's pseudonym was "N. Lenin."

## NOTES TO THE CONCLUSION

1. Such was, incidentally, the basis for methodological principles used by ANT sociologists themselves (Callon 1986 200–1).

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# Glossary of Key SST Terms

**Allopoiesis:** A system's being produced by external forces. A software program or a conveyor are examples of allopoietic systems because they are systems which are produced externally and are incapable of self-(re) production. (See **Autopoiesis; System**)

**Autopoiesis:** A system's being produced by itself and out of itself. A living organism is an example of autopoietic systems. (See **Allopoiesis; System**)

**Blind Spot:** A metaphor denoting that no observation can see everything. Some conditions will inevitably limit the observation and hamper seeing the entire world or the observed phenomenon. (See **Constructionism**)

**Catalysis:** (Also catalytic relation(s).) A type of relations between elements of a system which depends on the presence of another element comparable to a catalytic agent in chemical reactions. (See **Constraint; Element; Relation**)

**Causality:** SST distinguishes between two different types of causality (the interconnectedness of processes)—effect-causality and trigger-causality. The effect-causality is determined by and determines internal processes within an autopoietic system, its basis being the operational nature of the system. The trigger-causality comes from outside the system—from its environment, and can only prompt an internal process. Whether to make a change or ignore the prompt is entirely up to the system. (See **Coupling; Interpenetration; Structural Coupling**)

**Code:** The basic criterion of distinguishing which an autopoietic system applies to all observed phenomena in order to differentiate between what is its own and what is foreign and, ultimately, in order to tell itself apart from everything else. Codes are binary; they reflect the process of broadly conceived cognition of an autopoietic system, when the latter cleaves the world into two parts—itself and all the rest. In the social domain, the difference between positive and negative forms of language ('yes' vs. 'no') reflects the autopoietic coding. (See **Program**)

**Cognition:** Indication on the basis of differentiation. Cognition is a broadly conceived notion in SST which applies not only to mental processes in conscious psychic systems but to other types of autopoietic systems—living organisms and social systems.

**Communication:** 1) An operation which constitutes the basis of social autopoietic systems. Technically, communication is a process of coordinating changes in two (or more) complexes so that a change in one corresponds to a change in the other (another). In social systems, communication events are composed of three selections: Utterance, Information, Understanding. (See **Utterance**)

2) Communication is the sum total of communication events and a selectively organized network of relations between elements of a system which, internally, determine the nature of the system and, externally, its relationship with its environment.

**Constraint:** A type of relations between elements of a system where a relation between two (or more) elements cannot be established unless another element is present. (See **Catalysis**; **Element**; **Relation**)

**Constructionism:** As opposed to sociological 'realism', constructionism is a paradigm, according to which all social phenomena are constructed by an observer and are not given objectively. Within constructionism, social reality is seen as a product of somebody's observation—construction, which would differ from observations—constructions—of other observers. (See **Blind Spot**)

**Contingency:** The possibility of things to happen otherwise. Social development is to a large extent contingent because it is determined not only by human nature but by contingent ways a particular society chooses (hence, cultural differences). In social interaction, especially at the beginning, when neither one party nor the other know each other, the situation of **double contingency** (social action is bound to be contingent on both sides) occurs.

**Coupling:** a type of relation an autopoietic system develops with its environment. Although autopoietic systems are closed from their environment operation-wise, they are open because they rely on their environment and need to interact with it. Yet coupling cannot directly affect the internal, operational, communication of the system. (See **Causality**; **Structural Coupling**; **Interpenetration**)

**Cross:** In Spencer Brown's *Laws of Form*, cross is a separating line between two parts of a cloven space (form) and the instruction to cross this line: ┐. Cross is a graphic representation of the process of differentiation viewed as the foundation of all cognition. Crossing and crossing again result in double cross: ╗, at that the second crossing cancels the first. (See **Cognition**; **Environment**; **Form**; **System**)

**Cybernetics:** (from Greek "steering") a scientific discipline which studies control and self-control (hence, steering) and information processing systems. (See **Sociocybernetics**)

**Double contingency:** See **Contingency**

**Efficacy:** A specific type of relationship between systems which is based on what a particular system provides for other systems: science provides other social subsystems with knowledge; law—with legality;

etc. Translation's efficacy manifests itself in that translation mediates between systems and subsystems, being a social-systemic boundary phenomenon. (See **Function**; **Subsystem**)

**Eigen**-(behavior; -communication; -selectivity; -value): A non-accidental feature of a system. Eigen-features are the result of mutual limitations imposed by elements and relations in the system through their communication and selectivity established over time. Over the course of its development, the system acquires eigen-features in the sense that some of the features become likelier than others. Traditions in society are an example of eigen-values which do not completely exclude non-conformist behavioral patterns, yet make them unlikelier as compared to the conformist ones. (See **Element**; **Relation**)

**Element:** A unit of the system which manifests the nature of the system and cannot be further divided without transferring to another level of observation. In social systems, elements are communication events. (See **Catalysis**; **Constraint**; **Relation**)

**Environment:** What is not included into the system; the 'outside' of the system. Environment is amorphous and incapable of operations because as a whole, it does not have any self-organizing ability; it is a whole only from the viewpoint of the system for which it is the environment. Yet, consisting of systems, the environment is still capable of interacting with the system. In cybernetic terms, the environment provides the system with noise and alternative values out of which and thanks to which the system generates its internal order. (See also **Form**; **System**)

**Form:** 1) (Or strictly speaking: form of distinction) Any idea or notion is based on distinguishing a subject/phenomenon and opposing it to everything else. The subject/phenomenon is thus said to be distinguished and indicated. Graphically, it may be illustrated by drawing a circle on a sheet of paper. What is inside the circle is opposed to what is outside. If the inside is the focus of our consideration, then it is marked (=endowed with a greater value that the rest), the outside being unmarked; or vice versa. Thus, form is the result of the marking operation when a single space is divided into the indicated and selected space vs. all the rest. The concept of form is elaborated by G. Spencer Brown in his *Laws of Form* (1969).

2) A cluster of tightly connected elements of a medium (see **Medium**). For example, words are a form of a language as a medium, language being viewed as an amorphous pool of elements out of which concrete words as forms are produced. Sentences are a form of a language in the sense that they use loosely connected elements of the vocabulary (words) and syntactic rules as their basis for producing concrete sentences.

**Function:** Dealing with a problem or a set of related problems in social communication which constitute a focus of a social subsystem. In SST, modern society is theorized as a function-based society where different problems of communication are addressed by different subsystems such as the economy, law, religion, science, education, politics, medicine, etc.

Each function subsystem specializes in a specific function and therefore each function subsystem is unique (unequal compared to any other). Yet each subsystem, due to its focused speciality, requires other subsystems with their respective functions and efficacies to cater for what this particular subsystem needs but cannot produce. In their need of other subsystems, all function subsystems are equal. Thus, they are said to be equally unequal. (See **Efficacy**; **Subsystem**)

**Function subsystem:** See **Function**; **Subsystem**

**Human Being:** In SST, 'human being' is a notion which begs for further precision since human beings are theorized as being an intersection of three types of systems: their physical bodies are autopoietic living (biological) systems; their minds are autopoietic psychic systems; and finally, social involvements of human beings are enabled by social communications which pass through them yet form their own social system. Consequently, physical living systems are studied by physiology; psychic systems by psychology; and social systems by sociology. This SST-suggested focusing is often misunderstood for de-humanization of sociology. (See **Living Organism**, **Psychic System**, **Social System**)

**Information:** 1) See **Utterance**

2) Information is the difference which makes a difference, that is, something that occurs but not without a trace, leading to another occurrence. Thus, a difference in state A of the system (something happening or happening differently from what has been hithertofore) leads to state B of the system making the system's development to incur a change in the system's course. Not all differences lead to systemic differences: so many things happen to us daily, yet only some cause further differences and such differences that are qualified in SST as information. This understanding of information is borrowed by Luhmann from Gregory Bateson.

3) Information is the positive value of the code of the mass media—'information/non-information'. Only that which is considered worth broadcasting by mass media is information. Yet immediately after being broadcast, information turns into non-information, and mass media seeks a new piece of information.

**Interaction:** Dealings of the system with its environment. In the present study, the term *communication* is reserved for internal systemic processes and relations, whereas the term *interaction* refers to external relations of the system with its environment or segments thereof. (See **Causality**; **Form**; **Environment**; **System**)

**Interpenetration:** The contribution of systems in the environment of an autopoietic system to the latter's formation and functioning. Psychic systems enter the relationship of interpenetration with social systems because thoughts and social communication events interact in such a way that their respective complexities are made available for constituting the operational spaces of both systems. Yet the intersecting of constituents of both systems do not affect operational closures of the

interacting systems. Each of the interpenetrating systems treats the other and its elements as environmental noise, out of which their own internal order is created. Thoughts are noise for social systems out of which the latter create their communicational order. Psychic systems of translators are indispensible for translation processes, yet, while intersecting with the translation system, the psychic systems provide noise which is turned into translation communication system's order. This explains, among other things, the difference between translators' minds as 'black boxes', closed for social observation and socially visible translational communication events. (See **Coupling; Structural Coupling**)

**Living Organism:** A physical (biological) autopoietic system. Human body is an example of such system. Our body operates as a closure. The degree of such closure might be better appreciated when we take into consideration how insufficient our knowledge of our bodies is and how limited medicine is, despite all its unquestionable successes. (See **Human Being, Psychic System, Social System**)

**Meaning:** A universal medium of psychic and social systems. Meaning as medium is a sum total of all possibilities of connectivity of phenomena. Meaning provides a loosely connected set of elements which can assume different forms of tightly connected elements. Meaning is a surplus of options for systems to choose from for their operations. Some of options are accepted, some are not accepted now but are kept as potentially acceptable and some are rejected. The horizon of systemic meaning is constituted of all types of options. (See **Medium**)

**Mediation:** A type of social interaction in which interacting parties require an intermediary in order to be able to communicate. As compared to a two-party exchange which may be shown as A⇆B, mediation is always at least a three-party interaction: A⇆M⇆B, where A and B are interacting parties and M is a mediator between them.

**Medium:** A domain of loosely connected elements out of which different combinations of these elements, or forms, are produced (see **Form** (2)). Medium cannot be seen/apprehended directly; it is seen in/through its forms, concrete realizations of the medium. No form can exhaust the potential of its medium. Medium is rich and thrives on producing new forms. Language is an example of medium, out of which forms, such as words, sentences, texts, are produced. (See **Meaning**)

**Memory:** Systemic memory is a mechanism which allows the system to anticipate present and future operations based on past operations. Systemic memory operates as the form 'remembering/forgetting' suppressing some operations and suggesting others for reproduction.

**Observation:** The concept is abstract and surpasses the mere optic aspect of perception. Rather, observation is understood as distinguishing and indicating—that is, handling differences. Observation can be of the first- or second-order. The former is the observation of operations; the latter is the observation of observations. When the translation system observes

between translating and non-translating operations, it observes at the first level. When the translation system observes how it distinguishes between translating and non-translating operations and indicates the former as belonging to itself, it observes at the second level. This is the difference between practice and theory of translation. (See **Cognition**; **Operation**)

**Operation:** A unit of realization of a particular difference handling. Each system has its particular operations. In communication systems, operations are communication events. Communication events are momentary, vanishing as soon as they appear; yet they connect to other operations and produce an operational recursivity characteristic of a particular social system. (See **Communication** (1); **Observation**; **Utterance**)

**Program:** Rules of systemic communication which are more flexible than rigid binary codes. Programs allow the system adjust to new conditions of functioning. For example, translation qua system always observes phenomena according to the schema 'mediated/non-mediated', yet translation programs define the criteria of what is considered as mediated/mediatable. Translation programs can be founded in translators' commentaries or prescriptive translation theories. (See **Code**)

**Psychic system:** One of the autopoietic systems (like biological and social systems). It is located in the psychological domain. Human mental and other psychological processes occur in psychic systems. Psychic systems (as well as biological ones) are the environment of social systems, which means that both psychic, biological and social systems are operationally independent of one another, yet this is not to say that they do not need one another—no system can exist without its environment. (See **Human Being**, **Living Organism**, **Social System**)

**Re-entry:** Re-application of a difference within a difference. For example, the difference 'system/environment' becomes a re-entry when it is applied within the system: the system applies its difference from the environment to itself and begins to distinguish between different subsystems within itself. As a result, subsystems become systems in relation to other (sub)systems which, in turn, become their environment. Re-entry is possible only when a boundary is introduced which cleaves the space into marked and unmarked zones. Translation is a major factor of systemic re-entry because it thrives on juxtaposing the system and its environment and re-introducing this juxtaposition into the system. (See **Translation**)

**Reference:** The system's ability to distinguish between itself and its environment—between the self- and hetero-/other-reference.

**Relation:** Links developing between elements of the system. Elements can be compared to rooms in the house; relations between elements can be compared with beams and nails. Yet systems are not to be understood as simply related elements. Systems have preferences of certain relations over other relations; that is, relations are regulated, structured and hierarchilized within the system. (See **Catalysis**; **Constraint**; **Element**)

**Social System:** A type of autopoietic system which exists in the social domain. It consists of communication, not of people, yet people, composed of biological and psychic systems, constitute an indispensible environment without which social systems would not be able to exist. (See **Human Being**, **Living Organism**, **Psychic System**)

**Sociocybernetics:** A scientific discipline which applies systems science to sociology and other social sciences. See the online journal of sociocybernetics for more information: http://www.unizar.es/sociocybernetics/Journal/index.html (accessed January 6, 2011).

**Structural Coupling:** Interlinking of the system with its environment. As compared to operational connectivity within the system, structural coupling refers to the system's limited ability to react to irritations coming from its environment. Such irritations, however, never determine the system's reaction to them, but only suggest the necessity to take internal systemic measures in order to comprehend the environment.

**Subsystem:** One of the ways to analyze the structure of the social system is to decompose it into larger units of related elements. Such larger units can be distinguished according to their social functions as the basis of relating elements to one another, resulting in what is referred to as function subsystems—the legal subsystem, the art subsystem, the religion subsystem, etc. Arguably, in modern society, translation is also a subsystem.

**System:** "A whole which functions as a whole by virtue of the interdependence of its parts [ . . . ]" (Rapoport 1968, xvii). System exists in opposition to what surrounds it—its environment. Systems can be of different types. The types of systems relevant to the present study are allo- and autopoietic.

**Translation:** A form of the medium of social mediation. Translation is usually associated with interlingual mediation but should by no means be reduced to such mediation. The systems-theoretical definition of translation will depend on the difference schema applied. Translation operates in the medium of meaning. In modern society, translation can be seen as a full-fledged function subsystem. (See **Function**; **Meaning**; **Re-entry**; **Subsystem**)

**Understanding:** See **Utterance**.

**Utterance:** One of the selections of communication (see **Communication** (1)). Utterance is the entirety of the message, which will then be 'unpeeled' in quest of its communicative core (information) and understood and acted upon. For example, the utterance may be a phrase like "This bag is so heavy." The communicative core, information, i.e. the situational meaning, of the phrase may be "Help me!" Which the other party, having understood, may act upon, thereby completing the communication event.

# Index