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Conditions in Translation

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Abstract of the Thesis

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The following paper addresses the questions of meaning by a close study of the phenomenon of translation. In particular, translation involves saying the same in a different way. By addressing what is the "same" and what is "different," this study proposes that meaning is performed through translation—a performance of sameness-in-difference. The argument draws on structuralist concepts of *speech/language*, *signifier/signified*, as well as the distinction between *sense* and *reference*. It is concluded that these distinctions become possible through the performance of translation by instantiating these differences. The paper then draws on the hermeneutic tradition, especially as espoused by Gadamer, to justify an interpretation of understanding as requiring translation.

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Introduction

The present work can be seen as an elaboration on a prank, an elaboration on a prank by a great thinker at the twilight of his broad and illustrious philosophical career. The philosopher we have in mind is Paul Ricoeur—phenomenologist, hermeneuticist, and translator. And the prank, more like a seed, is planted at the end of his third essay in a short book entitled *On Translation*. There, after an elaborate and penetrating analysis, Ricoeur writes "construction is accomplished at the level of 'meaning'" (Ricoeur, 2004, 38). From the context we understand that Ricoeur is talking about "construction of comparables" in the very act of translation (2004, 37). The word "meaning" had not appeared up to that point as the subject of any of the previous discussions of translation within this little book entitled *On Translation*. Ricoeur seems to make an offhand suggestion that the phenomenon of translation is intertwined and implicated in the creation of meaning itself. This is a startling idea, that meaning is constructed through translation, which deserves further discussion. The present work is written in this spirit.

Why call these statements a prank? Because they are fleeting, yet powerful; suggestive, yet ambiguous; challenging, yet rewarding. These statements are a hermeneutical move—a beacon planted by an outstanding reader and writer. It is a call to take a journey of exploration where, by chance, the reader might broaden his horizon by translating what he reads. We will here undertake this journey and follow Ricoeur's suggestion in order to recover translation from the periphery of linguistic concerns. The idea that translation is intimately involved in meaningfulness should garner our full attention, if for no other reason than a cryptic suggestion by Ricoeur.

I.

§ 1. Translation: A Problematic Path

The translator begins with the given—with a text to be translated. His task is to translate, transfer, or transpose this source text to the readers in another language, called the target language. Here the idea of a target implies an act of aiming on the part of the translator. He is looking to "hit the mark" outlined by the original text and projected onto the other language. There is an aim, a goal, laid out before the translator prior to any activity on his part. According to this narrative, the language of the given text has already prepared the objective. The responsibility of the translator, then, is to achieve an accurate translation. But what exactly is an "accurate" translation? It is one that duplicates the original text in another language. In this sense, translation takes place after language has done its work. Prior to translation the text already contains meaning, which the act of translation must reproduce. In this sense, translation takes place on the fringe of language, a mere function of the contingent fact of the diversity of languages. For the translator it is a matter of finding the right expressions in another language to match the ones in the original. If the target is reached, then the two texts—original and its duplicate—will be the same.

Of course, the two texts will only be relevantly and relatively the same. They will be the same without being identical. Because no two languages parse the world in quite the same way, the translator admits that loss of original features is inevitable, but contends that accuracy can still be attained despite this loss. He labors in the face of the predicament where "linguistic systems seem to be mutually incommensurable" (Eco,

1998, 12). Where one language employs several words to make fine distinctions between concepts, another language has no equivalent signs. In this case, translating between these two languages would require manually, perhaps by concatenating several words, constructing the distinction and preserving the subtle meaning of the original text in the target language (Eco, 1998, 49). Already accuracy suffers just from using several signs in place of a single sign used in the original. Here, "loss" indicates quantitative difference in signs used between the original and its translation.

More often, there is loss related to the material elements of a language like phonation, meter, rhyme, etc., which also tends to be more extensive. But loss in translation of at least some of these linguistic features is almost inevitable for most utterances, and certainly unavoidable for entire texts.[1] Even in the extreme case of literal translation, condemned as flawed by Cicero two millennia ago, the phonetic properties must yield to the semantic properties of the original. Because the translator sets out to recreate, rather than copy the original, loss on some level is inherent in the endeavor of translating. Therefore, "if no word in a language is exactly the same as any other word in a different language, and languages are reciprocally incommensurable, either translating is impossible or it consists in freely interpreting the source text and recreating it" (Eco, 1998, 21).

Perfect translation is the distant light toward which every translator sets his sights while recognizing that he will fall short of this ultimate target. Knowing this, the translator is charged with preserving the essence of the original. The task is not hopeless since "incommensurability, does not mean incomparability" (Eco, 1998, 12). The

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[1]   In certain cases the opposite happens in translation: the rhythm and meter of the original are preserved at the expanse of literal meaning. For examples see Eco, 1998, 41-43.

translator must determine which losses are bearable and do not betray the original text. His task is that of a diplomat who negotiates a compromise that both sides can agree to live by. It is a matter of reaching the threshold where the translation is good enough and cannot be improved without further compromise elsewhere.

Naturally, the question to ask is how this threshold is determined—the point where the translation is good enough and loss has been restituted? This point is not given by the original text. Nothing in the text determines what can and cannot be lost. Rather, as far as the original text is concerned, it is without division into essential and inessential parts; the text is one. Not only is the idea of accuracy of translation compromised because perfect transfer is impossible, but even an approximation is doubtful. The target-theory "would be hard put to define the nature of this accuracy and therefore could shed no light on what is important in a translation" (Benjamin 256). In fact, the translator does not begin with a target outlined by the original text, as if the meaning of the text was distinctly labeled by the text itself. The narrative is "only a fantasy nourished by the banal admission that the original will not be duplicated by another original … A fantasy of perfect translation takes over from this banal dream of the duplicated original. It reaches a peak in the fear that, being translation, the translation will only be bad translation, by definition as it were" (Ricoeur, 2004, 5). What, if anything, does the translator duplicate? And if he only approximates, then what does he approximate to? Neither question is answered by the original text, but is raised and addressed by the translator. There is no preset target independent of the translator; otherwise, every translation would be a failure by definition. Therefore, the initial narrative of translation as "aiming at a target" is reversed.

Instead, the translator begins with a debt and works to meet the demands of the

foreign text, and thereby compensates for the losses that inevitably accrue. What is essential and what can be lost is determined by the translator himself, and this decision constitutes his heaviest burden. The translator does not flee from loss, but admits its inevitability and assumes responsibility for it. The fact of loss is not hidden or taken in bad faith by the translator, but rather accompanies his task, to a greater or lesser extent, from start to finish. In setting out to translate, one takes an oath (Derrida, 1998, 431). Meanwhile, the model of exact duplication is abandoned in favor of the practical work that must be performed. The translator does not need to resolve all his theoretical misapprehensions before taking up his task. He simply does it because translation is among life's conditions.

The speculative problems of the possibility of translation are suspended and replaced by the practical need to take up the work. We are confronted with the given: the multiplicity of languages. "This is how we are, this is how we exist, scattered and confounded, and called to what? Well … to translation!" (Ricoeur, 2004, 19). It is as if, faced with multiplicity of languages, we answer the question of 'how to translate' by simply taking up the labor of translation. In the process of freeing herself from speculative shackles, the translator discovers a depth in her mother tongue and greater understanding of her world (Ricoeur, 2004, 21). In this light, perfect translation (translation based on the model of accuracy) is abolished because the value of taking up the task of translation—the struggle—is itself valuable. José Ortega y Gasset invites us to view translation as a 'good utopia'—an endeavor likely to be impossible and most difficult, and attempted in full realization of its impossibility. To justify the claim, partly in jest and partly in complete seriousness, Ortega y Gasset writes "man's existence has a

sporting character, with pleasure residing in the effort itself, and not in the results. World history compels us to recognize Man's continuous, inexhaustible capacity to invent unrealizable projects" (Ortega y Gasset 99). We should pacify our own anxiety by seeing value in the losing effort that is translation. As the German Romantics held (a view that will be discussed in more depth later), by struggling against the foreignness of the text and its language, we are drawn to confront our own idioms and ways of engaging the world. In this different light, translation holds the keys to deeper knowledge of the self as well as of the other.

Nonetheless, even here, translation is problematized, though on a higher, more profound level. The fantasy of a perfect translation together with the dream of a perfect language has been laid to rest in favor of the inevitable drudgery of translation. Despite this "work of mourning" discussed by Ricoeur (2004, 8-9), the residual myth of translation as an unfortunate aftereffect of the confusion of languages persists. Necessity of translation constitutes the human condition. As the ghosts of Babel suggest, multiplicity of languages is the result of our initial fall, a punishment bestowed on man. "As the fall may be understood to contain the coming of the Redeemer, so the scattering of tongues at Babel has in it, in a condition of urgent moral and practical potentiality, the return to linguistic unity, the movement towards and beyond Pentecost" (Steiner 256). If only the fragmentation of languages could be reversed and translation avoided altogether, humanity would be restored to its original condition where communication had no barriers and it was possible to reach God.

The secular mind condemns these hopes as misguided, yet still believes the need for translation to be an obstacle and a problem. It is seen as a rewarding problem, but a

problem nonetheless. Coping with the insurmountable circumstances of translation rewards the struggling, but only if they face and accept their Sisyphean predicament. For this reason, the practice of translation finds itself in "an ancillary condition" (Berman 3), as a regrettable necessity that constantly reminds us of its presence despite our best efforts to relegate it to the periphery. In the words of Steiner "there is a special *miseria* of translation, a melancholy after *Babel*" (283).

Instead, translation must be brought back into or under the fold. The *miseria* must be overcome from within. Translation does not take place after language has congealed into meaningful utterances as language's garb, nor is it an accident of linguistic fragmentation. Translation concerns manipulation of meaning: expression and re-expression. These processes are constitutive of language, and not its aftereffects. As Jakobson has put so strongly "equivalence in difference is the cardinal problem of language and the pivotal concern of linguistics" (1959, 146). This puts translation at the center of the theory of language. After all, the result of translation is something that is equivalent to the original, yet also obviously very different. If indeed understanding this paradox is central for the understanding of language, then treating translation as a regrettable hindrance means treating language in the same way.

§2. Word "Translation"

The word "translation" originated from the Latin word "translat" via the French word "translater." Originally the Latin root meant "to bear across."[2] In today's usage, however, the noun "translation" has a bifurcated sense: it can stand for a mass noun in certain contexts and for a count noun in certain others.[3] As a mass noun "translation" refers to a process and an activity. In this, the word has retained its root meaning of "bringing across"—a dynamic sense. On the other hand, as a count noun, "translation" also refers to the end result of the activity; for example, the final rendering of a text in another language is called a translation.[4] Accordingly, we can qualify a translation as if it were a singular object; it can be good or bad, accurate or inaccurate, or exhibit a host of other characteristics. All these qualifications apply to the final product of the translator. In short, "translation" refers equally to a type of artifact and to the process of creating that artifact.

In this duality, the word "translation" is not unique or unprecedented. There are plenty of other expressions with the same grammatical characteristics. "Painting," "building," and "sculpture," for instance, also refer to the process of creation of the artifact as well as to the artifact itself. Painting is the creation of paintings as well as the thing hanging on the wall. Therefore, the grammatical characteristics alone do not render "translation" peculiar in any way. What does make the word peculiar is the influence that

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[2]   Weekley, Ernest. *An Etymological Dictionary of Modern English*. New York: Dover, 1967.

[3]   *Oxford Dictionary of English*. Ed. J. Pearshall, P. Hanks, C. Soanes, and A. Stevenson. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.

[4]   Notice the grammatical consistency of using the indefinite article.

these grammatical characteristics have on its overall meaning. In order for the two senses to coexist harmoniously, equal emphasis is ascribed to both of them and they are reconciled in a certain semantic conception of the word "translation."[5] The result is an implicit understanding of translation that is at once non-trivial and exceedingly overlooked.

We are forced, through grammar, to see the process of translation as tending toward and being defined by the production of an artifact. It is an intermediary means to producing a certain end. But such an interpretation strays farther away from the initial meaning of translation as "bearing across." Whereas painting and sculpture signify the act of creation, translation is not a creation but a re-creation of some sort. Therefore, whereas a painting or a sculpture comes into being through the process of painting or sculpting, the artifact of translation (if indeed there is one) is not created but carried (borne) across. Consequently, to "bear across" is forced to mean "bring across something from one side to the other."

The problem arises when we ask what is being borne across. That there is a "something" being carried is implied by the very duality of grammatical senses mentioned above. If translation is a "bearing across" that culminates in the production of an artifact and there is something at the start of this process, then it must be the case that there is a "something" being borne across throughout the translating process itself. The obvious inference is that what is carried across is the meaning of a text or a sentence. Consequently, the process of translation is not taken as a creative process, but as a labor analogous to that of a mule. The mule takes meaning from one area and transfers it to

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5   An important question, which will be indirectly addressed below, is whether 'interpretation' is in this

another area. Such a narrative of translation misses most of what is peculiar about it. Yet, the tension between the grammatical and semantic features just discussed forces us toward this very narrative. We are forced to think of translation as carrying meaning across a linguistic gap, and in turn meaning is seen as something that can be "picked up" and "carried across."

The entire conundrum is rooted in the fundamental problem of meaning. Whence does meaning emerge? Is meaning located or embodied in the text? Is it projected or constructed by the interpreter? Whatever answers are given to these fundamental questions, they are central and even inseparable from questions regarding translation. George Steiner locates the obstacles of translation theories in the sphere of theories of meaning. He writes:

> The theory of translation, so largely literary and *ad hoc*, ought not to be held to account for having failed to solve problems of meaning, of the relations between words and the composition of the world to which logic and metaphysics continue to give provisional, frequently contradictory answers. The fault, so far as the theory goes, consists of having maneuvered *as if* these problems of relation were solved or as if solutions to them were inferentially obvious in the act of translation itself (292).

The tension in the very word "translation" alluded to above simply reflects the unresolved questions and tensions regarding the meaning of "meaning." This tension in the dual senses of "translation" suggested by the grammar can be captured in the opposition of two questions: does translation contribute to constitution of meaning or is translation an act of carrying meaning from one medium into another one? We may see translation as bearing something—meaning—across the linguistic gap; or we may see translation as the self-bearing of meaning in the sense of "bearing oneself across." Of course, Steiner's point is that translators cannot operate under the assumption that these

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same grammatical predicament as 'translation.'

issues are resolved. They cannot blindly accept the narrative of translation that the English language beckons to accept.

As it stands, our language imposes on us ways of thinking about translation which should not be accepted uncritically. The idea that the translator is a mere carrier, a go-between, cannot underlie the investigations of translation. Otherwise translation will remain a fringe phenomenon on the outskirts of language and speech. Our initial task, therefore, is to reformulate and reframe the way we speak about translation. The aim is not to define what translation is, but to reframe the sphere of inquiry in a way that resists certain impositions of language. In accomplishing this task, we must at the same time endeavor to retain all the ambiguities and questions that translation originally presents to us.

§ 3. Sameness in the Midst of Difference

In order to carry out our reformulation, we look to the phenomenon itself and describe what happens in translating. By "translation" we have in mind the phenomenon of *saying the same thing in a different way*. This model will serve as the initial, working description of translation. In reformulating our object in this way, we have not strayed from what actually takes place in translation, nor have we imported any extrinsic ideas in a roundabout way. As Ricoeur points out "it is always possible to say the same thing in another way" and this activity captures the task of the translator (Ricoeur, 2004, 25). Consider, the translated text is not its own original, rather it owes its existence to the source text. At the same time, the translation is not a mere duplicate of the original. It is somehow the same as the original text, yet also very different. We still call the *Bible* translated into English or Chinese the *Bible*. And when we ask "have you read the *Iliad*?" we do not mean "have you read the *Greek Iliad*" as opposed to the *English Iliad*. The *Iliad* refers to a specific text without discrimination between the original and the translation; these are not two different texts, but rather two different instances of the same text. Here, then, is the paradox of translation, the puzzle of *sameness-in-difference*.

Our model of "saying the same thing in a different way" does not resolve the issue of loss or propose any methodologies for translation. The terms "sameness" and "difference" retain all the demanded ambiguity of the original word translation, which, far from diminishing the model, actually gives it credibility. In thinking about translation as sameness-in-difference, the path of reversals traced out in section one of this work is kept intact; this path is not covered over by a definition. Translationary loss has acquired

an ambiguous, yet primary, status. Both sameness and difference are linked with loss. Sameness is identified in opposition to the lost, and difference is, in part, identified with that which was lost as well as that which was added. We have found a way to talk about translation in a different way by retaining all the nuances of the original word while using a different expression. In addition, we have freed ourselves from the seductive narratives of translation suggested by the English language itself.

The trade off, however, the consequence of our translation of translation, is that we are no longer limited to discussing translation between different languages—what Jakobson has termed *interlingual* translation (Jakobson, 1959, 145). We can say the same thing in a different way within our own language. It is possible to rephrase an utterance and thereby translate it into a different yet equivalent utterance. This Jakobson termed *intralingual* translation. Both modes are called translation despite identifiable differences, because both fit the framework of "saying the same thing in a different way." But doesn't this simply muddle the meaning of "translation?" Our model seems to include too many peripheral cases.

It is true that interpreting translation as sameness-in-difference expands the field of study, but there are significant reasons for going through with this. Primarily, the difference between sameness and difference of languages is implicated in the issue of translation. There is no absolute identity of a single language, even though pointing out instances of clearly different languages presents no problem. Saussure phrases this same claim as "languages have no natural boundaries" because "language boundaries, just like dialect boundaries, get lost in … transitions. Just as dialects are only arbitrary subdivisions of the entire surface covered by a language, so the boundaries held to

separate two languages can only be conventional ones" (Saussure 202). For example, instances can be pointed out where different dialects or chronologically separated idioms blur the boundary between one and several languages. To limit translation to *interlingual* translation presupposes that marking the boundary of a single language is prior to translation i.e. not itself part of translation. Let us examine the pitfalls of this presupposition.

Is the Elizabethan English of Shakespeare the same English language we speak today?[6] Is the language of doctors, teenagers, or musicians the same single language? Is British English the same language as American English? To answer these questions one must attempt to translate idioms and expressions from one sphere into the other. When speakers of one community can perform the translations of the idioms of the other community without difficulty, then the two spheres of expression constitute shades of a single language; but, if saying the same thing differently becomes impossible, then this marks the boundary between languages. Which is to say that "people who cannot understand one another are generally described as speaking different languages" (Saussure 202). For this reason, Derrida leaves undecided "the question of a simple choice between language and metalanguage, between one language and another" because "at the word go we are within the multiplicity of languages and the impurity of the limit" (Derrida, 1998, 425). Translatability serves as the primary criterion for conventional division of languages and dialects. Therefore, the study of translation cannot be limited to *interlingual* translation, because the activity of translation is implicated in the very division of languages as well as the distinction between *inter* and *intra* lingual translation

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[6]   Steiner makes the point that translation occurs within a "single" language where the barrier between source and receptor language is time (Steiner, 29).

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(Derrida, 1985, 173).

Indeed, translation happens all the time within a single language, but it happens imperceptibly precisely because the unity of that language depends on the ease with which its users can perform translations. Steiner insists that "the process of diachronic translation inside one's own native tongue is so constant, we perform it so unawares, that we rarely pause either to note its formal intricacy or the decisive part it plays in the very existence of civilization" (Steiner 30). An effortless translation is still a translation, even though it does not draw attention to itself.

Our discussion of translation, its reformulation as "saying the same thing in a different way," brings translation closer to the heart of language. Translation is not limited to the work of specialists: all people rephrase utterances in different ways; nor is translation rare: people frequently repeat in their own words what someone else has said or what they themselves have said in the past. When someone is asked to repeat what was said, he or she usually does not try to remember what was *said*, but rather what was *meant*. Thus, translation becomes the portal into the everyday happening of language, but it does so at a price. In going from a specialized practice of translation of primary texts to a widespread linguistic phenomenon, we have nonetheless spread thin the notion of translation.

§ 4. Metaphor and Untranslatables

To understand the activity of "saying the same thing in a different way" within the

deeper context of language we must bring this activity into focus. A sort of relief must be

drawn in order to bound, as best as possible, this vast and overflowing phenomenon. It is

overflowing because, as we have already indicated, translation cannot be restricted to the

ordinary sense of translation between languages—*interlingual* translation. In order to

contain the spread of translation we will look at its limit, the area where translation

becomes impossible. This limit, this outside of translation, is suggested by Ricoeur and

here we will follow his lead. He writes:

> Real metaphors are not translatable. Only metaphors of
> substitution are susceptible of a translation which could restore
> the literal signification. Tension metaphors are not translatable
> because they create their meaning. This is not to say that they
> cannot be paraphrased, just that such a paraphrase is infinite and
> incapable of exhausting the innovative meaning
> (1976, 52).

Here Ricoeur makes a strong statement that must be untangled in all its implications and

consequences. By tracing what is untranslatable we will aim to understand what is

involved in translation.

First, what does Ricoeur mean by "real metaphor?" From the quote it is clear that

real metaphor can be contrasted with metaphors of substitution. In addition, real

metaphors create their meaning. By "substitution metaphor" Ricoeur refers to an entire

theory of metaphor, derived from Aristotle's initial analyses in *Poetics* and *Rhetoric*,

which sees metaphor as a process of replacing one word by another. According to this

view "metaphor is one of these rhetorical figures, the one where resemblance serves as

the reason for substituting a figurative word for a missing or an absent literal word"

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(Ricoeur, 1976, 48). Thus, metaphor operates through a kind of deviation from the literal meaning of words by filling a lexical lacuna. Metaphor is inventive naming. What is essential for Ricoeur is that this conception of metaphor, rooted in the theory of rhetoric, treats metaphor exclusively at the level of the word (1976, 65-66). It is the word that carries the deviation and it is the word that becomes a figure of speech. But Ricoeur wants to subvert and subsume precisely this approach to metaphor and shift the analysis of this phenomenon to the level of utterance, or actually the interpretation of utterance (Ricoeur, 1976, 50). Substitution metaphor would thereby become one case of metaphor instead of metaphor as such.

For us, however, it is important to point out that substitution metaphor *is* translatable. By simply looking at what substitution metaphor means, we can see that naming something by an unusual word is just another case of saying the same thing in a different way. Sameness is implied by substitution, because in using a metaphor one replaces a word by another that, due to sufficient resemblance, can legitimately take its place. Sameness is preserved through resemblance, and nothing new is produced. This is the fifth of the six tenets of the classical theory of rhetorical metaphor outlined by Ricoeur, the one that he aims to overcome. "Hence the substituted signification does not represent any semantic innovation. We can translate a metaphor, i.e., replace the literal meaning for which the figurative word is a substitute" (1976, 49).[7] For this reason metaphor belonged to rhetoric, since its use becomes a matter of style intended to have an emotive affect on the audience.

On the other hand, real metaphor must be differentiated first and foremost with

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[7]   Ricoeur's claim is ambiguous with respect to the type of translation he has in mind: interlinguistic or intralinguistic. This is in fact consistent with our model of translation as saying the same thing in a

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respect to its semantic level. Ricoeur argues that metaphor can only be properly understood on the level of the sentence. A level that is irreducible to the straightforward summation of parts, of constituent words. Metaphor appears at the level of the sentence, before it appears at the level of words. It is a phenomenon of predication and not denomination (Ricoeur, 1976, 50). Because metaphor takes place within an ensemble— within an utterance—it is the result of what Ricoeur calls a "tension." This tension occurs between two ordinarily incongruent contexts of the terms involved in the utterance. Ricoeur then extends this position and writes "what we have just called the tension in a metaphorical utterance is really not something that occurs between two terms in the utterance but rather between two opposed interpretations of the utterance. It is the conflict between these two interpretations that sustains the metaphor" (1976, 50). Within metaphor the meaning of words is extended due to the interpenetration of the literal sense and the meaning of the rest of the utterance. Therefore, real metaphor is a kind of absurdity or even an error, one that serves to extend the ordinary meaning of words. Hence, whereas substitution is a "sterile operation," in a live metaphor "the tension between the words, or, more precisely, between the two interpretations, one literal and the other metaphoric, at the level of the entire sentence, elicits a veritable creation of meaning…" (Ricoeur, 1976, 52).

Live metaphor, what Ricoeur also calls real metaphor, is precisely the sphere of the untranslatable in terms of which we seek to delimit the sphere of the translatable. As long as a metaphor involves an absurdity and requires work on the part of the interpreter to extend the meaning of words, this metaphor is a unique occurrence that pushes against the boundary of accepted vocabulary. Live metaphor is beyond the dictionary, as Ricoeur

different way, which retains the same ambiguity.

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says (1976, 52). Accordingly, there is no way of re-identifying a live metaphor or saying the same thing in a different way. The live, poetic metaphor is unique in its expressivity. One could say that untranslatability is the tacit dream of a true poet, and as Gadamer put it, "the ideal of poetic legend is its untranslatability" (1983, 13). And, getting back to Ricoeur's original quote, a paraphrase of a live metaphor simply won't do. There is loss of content that negatively affects the originality of what is created through the metaphor; the innovation of meaning dies in the paraphrase.

Approaching the phenomenon of translation in light of the untranslatable, through analysis of metaphor, renders the boundary from both sides. We are converging on the phenomenon of translation by identifying opposing cases. On one side stands the untranslatable live metaphor that cannot be re-identified in a different way and whose function is to create meaning. On the other side stands the translatable sphere. Per our model, this includes all those utterances that may be said in another way. Also on the side of translation remains the metaphor of substitution, which Ricoeur never banishes but merely subsumes under his theory of live metaphor. Therefore, the phenomenon of translation is put in relief by two kinds of metaphor that stand on either side of the boundary. Live metaphor of hermeneutic tension is on the side of the untranslatable meaning, whereas dead metaphor of substitution (of rhetoric) is on the side of the translatable meaning.

The above division suggests two important problems. First, there is an asymmetry between the untranslatable live metaphor and translatable meaning. What we called the function of live metaphor is to create meaning. Perhaps the term function is misapplied here since what is meant is a certain linguistic contribution. Nonetheless, we may say that

the untranslatable sphere has a function or a contribution to make in relation to language. The translatable, however, does not seem to have any equivalent of such contribution. Of course, the only reason we have for seeking this equivalence is aesthetic—a kind of neatness of symmetry. At the moment the problem must remain in the shadow as an intuition that translation—saying the same thing in a different way—may contribute something to the operation of language. The second problem, however, will turn out to be more manageable: mainly, how is substitution metaphor related to tension metaphor?

Addressing the second problem will be our next step. Because the two kinds of metaphor stand on either side of the translation divide, tracing out the path from one to the other will yield further clues about what is involved in translation—how the boundary between translatable and untranslatable is constituted. Furthermore, keeping in mind our first problem, we can later address the question of the function or contribution of translation to language. In order to trace out this path between live and dead metaphor we turn again to Ricoeur. His division of live and dead metaphor (itself a metaphorical division of some significance) suggests that the one is a special case of the other. That is, live metaphor tends to shed its novelty and after some time becomes sedimented into common linguistic usage.

The transition from live to dead metaphor occurs in time; it is diachronic in Saussurian terms. And the innovation of meaning is an event, which also necessitates diachronic analyses. However, the innovation itself, once it takes root in language, requires synchronic analyses. The point may be put as follows: the creation of meaning through metaphor is an event and a speech act, whereas the understanding of this innovation demands recovery of this meaning in relation to the language as a systematic

whole. Ricoeur talks of this distinction in several interrelated ways. Firstly, he makes the distinction between event and meaning in discourse. Talking of discourse as an event "reminds us that discourse is realized temporally and in a present moment, whereas the language system is virtual and outside of time" (1976, 11). So by "event" Ricoeur means the performance of language in discourse; in contrast, the meaning is part of the virtual linguistic system of signs in terms of which discourse is understood (Ricoeur, 1976, 12). Secondly, the distinction of event and meaning maps on to Ricoeur's distinction between speech and language—they are two ways of talking about the idea which plays an important role in his theory of metaphor.

The above division serves to trace the path from live to dead metaphor. Live metaphor is a phenomenon belonging to speech because it involves innovation of meaning. Thus, "however numerous the intermediary stages recorded by the history of semantic changes in a word, each individual change is a leap that attests to the dependence of innovation on speech" (Ricoeur, 1975, 121). Yet, the change in meaning must connect to the linguistic code if it is to be interpretable. The word that underwent innovation of meaning must be sustained through polysemy.

> This is what metaphor will augment to some degree, when,
> having ceased to be an innovation, it enters into standard usage
> and then becomes a cliché; the circle is then completed between
> language and speech. The circle can be described in the
> following manner. Initial polysemy equals 'language,' the living
> metaphor equals 'speech,' metaphor in common use represents
> the return of speech towards language, and subsequent polysemy
> equals 'language' (Ricoeur, 1975, 121).

Here, then, is the path from live to dead metaphor, but here also, as was intended from the beginning of the analyses, emerges more clearly the boundary that circumscribes the field of translation. Tension metaphor takes place as an event of speech, whereas

substitution metaphor takes place at the systematic level of language. Consequently, translation also takes place on the level of language, which means that the translator deals with the synchronic states of the system of signs. Whereas true metaphor occurs as a speech event, translation occurs as transformation of meaning in language.

§ 5. Structuralism

Our attempt to focus the phenomenon of translation has opened up language, in opposition to speech, as translation's proper field of operation. That is, translation takes place between linguistic systems of signs or within a single system of signs, but in both cases the systems are in a particular a-temporal state where no innovation takes place. Formally, to use Jakobson's terminology, the task of the translator is to take a coded message and reconstitute this message in another code. This is the operation of translation taken at face value; it takes place between static slices of otherwise evolving systems of signs. With the distinction between speech and language, we are situated squarely within the structuralist tradition of Saussure. It is precisely the distinction between speech and linguistic structure which allowed Saussure to study language in terms of structures of signs to the exclusion of actual performances of language via speech (Saussure 77). For Saussure, what is called *language* above is the synchronic state of the linguistic system of signs. This synchronic system is contrasted with the evolving, temporal change that the system naturally undergoes. This temporal axis Saussure calls diachronic, with the central impetus of change occurring through the performance of language—what is referred to as *speech* above.

With regard to translation, Saussure's structuralism provides the ideal avenue for tackling the perplexing phenomenon of sameness-in-difference. The following central claim from *Course in General Linguistics* justifies this initial approach: "the mechanism of a language turns entirely on identities and differences" (107). Indeed, translation too

turns primarily on identities and differences. Somehow a translated text is the same[8] as

the original, but is also clearly very different. There is obviously loss of original features,

but the effect of these losses and differences is covered over and made negligible. If our

model of "saying the same thing in a different way" aims to treat *interlingual* translation

on par with *intralingual* rewording, then the basic problem common to both is how two

different linguistic entities can remain the same despite their differences. It comes to the

same thing to say that linguistic entities, whether individual signs or sentences, cannot be

inherently meaningful. Their differences from other entities must somehow play a

positive role in the constitution of their sameness. This is precisely the Saussurian

paradigm from which discussion of translation must begin.

For Saussure, the value of a linguistic unit—word or a morpheme—is determined by

the structure of relations it has to other units (words or morphemes) within the system.

What is central to the proposal is that "the content of a word is determined in the final

analysis not by what it contains but by what exists outside it. As an element in a system,

the word has not only a meaning but also—above all—a value" (114). That is, the usage

of words, and by extension the production of utterances, is relative to a system of

relations, which is language itself. The value of a word is determined by what is in its

vicinity[9] (Saussure 114); which means that there must be a hierarchy of values in terms of

which any individual unit—a word in the case of language—can be evaluated. Roughly

speaking, the value of a word is what one can 'get' for it, what can be exchanged for it.

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[8]   We must here reformulate what Saussure means by 'identity' in terms of sameness. It has been already
       remarked that a translation is never identical to the original, but is nevertheless the same as the
       original. To mix up these terms here—based on a particular translation of Saussure—would cover
       up the central issue we mean to address.
[9]   By 'vicinity' is meant all those nodes within the linguistic system of structures whose value is close to
       that of the original node within that system.

Consequently, no linguistic entity is inherently valuable or substantial in the sense of standing for an idea or concept on its own. Rather, ideas are parsed among each other through a coordination of linguistic entities; the two structures, ideas and linguistic units, are co-delineated, without either subsisting apart from the other. This brings Saussure to one of his central thesis, which was also alluded to above:

> What we find, instead of ideas given in advance, are values emanating from a linguistic system. If we say that these values correspond to certain concepts, it must be understood that the concepts in question are purely differential. That is to say they are concepts defined not positively, in terms of their content, but negatively by contrast with other items in the same system. What characterizes each most exactly is being whatever the others are not (115).

In other words, identities are constituted through structures of differences within a system of signs (which are themselves constituted by differences).

Already, with Saussure's formulation of "value," the process of translation can be discerned just below the surface of his approach. The value of a sign lies in its *exchangeability*. Now, translation, according to the model of sameness-in-difference, is precisely the performance of such an exchange. In translating a sentence, the sentence is reworded in terms of other units which, in total, have the same value. And the totality in question is a certain structure of relations between elements in the sentence itself as well as broader oppositions with other nodes in the vicinity. In this light, sameness of value between different elements becomes possible through equivalence of structure. Two elements in a system may differ in certain respects, like the shape of a chess piece can differ between different chess sets (analogous to phonetic composition of words), yet be equivalent in the structure of relations they both exhibit with respect to other elements within the system. A wooden, carved chess piece can be replaced by a bottle cap while

retaining its value as a specific chess piece—a bishop, for instance. As long as the bottle

cap retains its relation to the pawns, knights, and rooks, and follows certain rules

determined by the chess-system (moves and attacks diagonally as the bishop does), then

the bottle cap is effectively a bishop (Saussure 108). The material particulars are

irrelevant.

The implications of Saussure's structuralism for the theory of translation are striking.

We infer that to translate between languages or within a single language means

constructing the same structure of relations out of different elements. Translation would

appear then as an isomorphism. The value of an utterance remains the same because the

structure of differences is retained while its material features are exchanged. It is like

changing two quarters for five dimes: the monetary value remains the same despite the

difference in coins used. Since the value—the meaning—is what's important, the loss is

acceptable in most instances. In fact, so far as the function of an utterance is solely to

convey meaning, loss of material features is acceptable as long as they do not alter the

structure.

Analogously, André Martinet draws an informative parallel between language and

construction of buildings. "In language," he writes, "the relevant elements are those that

take part in the establishment of communication. In other words, structure, both in

buildings and languages, can be identified with what we may call the relevant features of

the object" (Martinet 3). For a building, the "relevant features" are those that allow the

building to satisfy its function of providing a dwelling space for people. Whether the

building is made of wood, stone, or concrete is relevant only to the extent that these

materials allow the instantiation of the building's structure. Similarly, whether one says

"bonjour," "guten Tag," or "good day" is relevant only so far as the addressee understands that the utterance is a greeting. Hence, translation, within the structuralist paradigm, is like rebuilding the same building using different materials.

In this light, the translator's main task is not to avoid, compensate, or overcome loss, but to actually initiate it, to lose those aspects of the original that can be lost without distorting its structure. In other words, translation operates by a sort of reduction—a negative operation—where certain phonetic, morphological, and grammatical elements are jettisoned in favor of the structure comprising meaning. If we are to speak of translation, along with Gadamer, as highlighting, then we must simply qualify that this highlighting is achieved not by bringing something out, but by pushing something back. Similarly, Ricoeur talks of the need to perform a "screening" upon words in order to whittle out the relevant meaning out of the polysemy of words (2004, 26).

At this stage of our study, whatever creative activity may be attributed to the translator, it is the activity analogous to that of a sculptor who chisels the figure out of stone, rather than like a painter who adds paint to the canvas. The sculptor remains loyal to the stone by letting it guide his hand in hammering away the excess matter. As the sculptor does away with the stone, so the translator gets rid of the linguistic chaff in order to expose the kernel—the structure and form of the text.

§ 6. Structuralism Re-examined

Yet the sculptor metaphor fails at several important points. The translator cannot simply isolate *the* structure—*the* "bare meaning"—but must reconstitute the structure from different elements. His route to sameness is paved with difference. Translation involves addition despite the translator's mostly negative work. This is the essential predicament of the translator: being bound by language on both sides. The translator cannot aim to expose the pure meaning of an utterance or text by merely stripping away the linguistic debris. Some other material must take its place. Here lurks a deeper concern having to do with the fundamental principles of structuralism.

The opening move of linguistic structural analysis proposed by Saussure is to distinguish between the signifier and the signified, and to then demonstrate the arbitrary relation between the two (Saussure 67-69). In other words, for Saussure, the sound pattern (signifier) and the concept (signified) that the sound pattern relays are not inherently linked together. The sign consists of these two moments, which are linked together contingently through convention. There is an arbitrary correlation of the system of differences of the signifier and the system of differences of the signified. The result is a differential system of signs. This move is crucial for the further separation of historical linguistics from semiotics by way of the diachronic/synchronic distinction already discussed in section four.

Yet, what is the justification for separating the signifier from the signified and insisting on their arbitrary relation? Saussure answers that "this [arbitrariness of the relation] is demonstrated by differences between languages, and even by the existence of

different languages" (68). Diversity of languages is the evidence that sound patterns and the concepts they express are only contingently related. After all, the reasoning goes, if numerous sound patterns are known to express the same concept (for instance that of "sister" in English and German), then there cannot be anything within the concept itself demanding that it be expressed by one sound pattern rather than another.

Let us pause for a moment and consider this claim with some reservation—refrain from being convinced too quickly. For Saussure, the multiplicity of languages serves as evidence, a demonstration, for the arbitrary relation between signifier and signified. But what is the actual connection between that which is demonstrated and that which demonstrates? Is multiplicity of languages a consequence of the arbitrary relation involved in the sign, or is it rather the source of this relation? What would happen to the sign if there were not a multitude of languages, no differences between languages, but only a single language? The sole evidence for the arbitrary relation of signifier to signified would be diachronic change of that language. One could try to trace through time the change of a sound-pattern corresponding to a specific concept, and then use this as evidence to demonstrate the arbitrary relation. Yet, is this not a covert appeal to linguistic difference? If the diachronic drift is substantial to serve as a demonstration, then it is also substantial enough to distinguish two historically situated linguistic states as two different languages. It appears that multiplicity of languages, either synchronic or diachronic,[10] constitutes all the available evidence for Saussure's first principle of linguistics.

Even so, the counter-argument goes, the relation between signifier and signified is

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[10]   Here this Saussurian distinction gestures at two cases of linguistic multiplicity, that of several
        languages across the globe at a given time (synchronic) and several languages appearing in time as

still arbitrary. By "arbitrary" we mean "can be otherwise." It means that a possibility exists for things to be other than how they are. And lack of evidence does not negate the possibility of a different signifier being linked to the same signified. Even if only one language were known to man, nonetheless the arbitrariness principle would hold. We would probably not know about this principle or be in a position to demonstrate it empirically, but it would still hold.

Yet, what would it hold for? What would the arbitrary relation hold for if there were only one language and no way of saying the same thing in different ways? Supposedly the relation would still hold between the signifier and the signified; but how would the signifier and the signified ever become disjoined enough to draw such a distinction in the first place. No diversity of languages, no evidence of arbitrariness, and no way of transferring the signified into another material guise. Consequently, the very word "signified" would refer to nothing different than just the sign of which it is supposedly only a part—it would refer to the totality of signifier and signified together. The counter objection rehearsed above, that the sign can in principle be bisected into parts (signifier and signified) despite the lack of any empirical evidence, does not work. It is a dubious proposal. The sound pattern, the material part of the sign, must by definition be empirically demonstrable. In this case, either everything or nothing is linguistic chaff. If only one language exists, and more to the point, if no sameness-in-difference is performed, then the signifier is never peeled off from the signified. And it is only in the process of such peeling off that the distinction can emerge at all.

Diversity of languages is more than a symptom of the arbitrariness of the signifier/signified relation, more than its demonstration. Instead, it points to a deeper

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an evolutionary consequence of language development (diachronic).

inner requirement of language for redundancy—for multiple ways of expressing the same thing (Gadamer, 1960, 445). And the signifier/signified binary owes its possibility to this same inner necessity. As Emile Benveniste points out "between the signifier and the signified, the connection is not arbitrary; on the contrary, it is necessary. The concept (the 'signified') *boeuf* is perforce identical in my consciousness with the sound sequence (the 'signifier') *böf*. … Together the two are imprinted in my mind, together they invoke each other under any circumstance" (45). Hence, it isn't that one can point to either the signifier or the signified in raw form, in separation from one another—even as two sides of a sheet of paper. Rather, in language, what one tries to communicate and the way that one tries to communicate it are not uniquely related.

In saying the same thing in a different way, whether within a single language or within several languages, the code is varied while the message remains the same. It is in the process of translation, through repetition and in use, that the message emerges as abstractable from the code. It is pertinent to quote Wittgenstein here "every sign by itself seems dead. What gives it life?—In use it is alive. Is life breathed into it there? Or is the use its life?" (Wittgenstein 432). By beginning to see translation as one case of usage, if not a paradigmatic instance of it, translation inches closer to its status as the life-giving movement of signs. And, when Saussure talks of arbitrariness, he can mean nothing more than a variability instanced in saying the same thing in different ways.

The point can be extended to the difference between signifier/signified (or code/message) in general. What is indicated by this distinction is not absolute, but depends on the system of relations among particular cases (in speech) of separation of the signifier from the signified. As Derrida put it in an interview with Kristeva:

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> Nor is it a question of confusing at every level, and in all simplicity, the signifier and the signified. That this opposition or difference cannot be radical or absolute does not prevent it from functioning, and even from being indispensable within certain limits—very wide limits. For example, no translation would be possible without it. In effect, the theme of a transcendental signified took shape within the horizon of an absolutely pure, transparent, and unequivocal translatability. *In the limits to which it is possible, or at least appears possible, translation practices the difference between signified and signifier* [emphasis added]. But if this difference is never pure, no more so is translation, and for the notion of translation we would have to substitute a notion of transformation: a regulated transformation of one language by another, of one text by another. We will never have, and in fact have never had, to do with some "transport" of pure signifieds from one language to another, or within one and the same language, that the signifying instrument would leave virgin and untouched (Derrida, 1972, 20).

With Derrida we maintain that translation practices the difference between signifier and signified, but this performance of sameness-in-difference is the condition of the signifier/signified binary. When translating, then, the message is not given separately from the code. One does not simply translate the meaning. Rather, the translator is precisely the one who *performs* or *transperforms* the separation between the form and the material of language. This separation is not pre-given. And the same goes for language at large: performance of sameness-in-difference is the condition of the emergence of meaning. It is not that translation occurs because the transcendental signified falls within reach, rather the very notion of the transcendental signified is entertained because of translation.

§ 7. Different Differences

In the above section, we suggested that the very difference between the signifier and signified emerges from the performance of sameness-in-difference. For instance, the same sound-pattern can be linked to several different meanings (polysemy) or the same concept can be expressed by different words (synonymy) i.e. sound-patterns. These cases can be picked out because of the structure of signs and their relations. Synonyms occupy the same nexus (as far as their meanings overlap) in virtue of the sameness of their structure of differences within the linguistic system. In saying the same thing in a different way, the meaning is brought out by losing and subtending what is different. And in this performance, or rather transformance, in the case of synonymy, the signified remains while the signifier is altered and the difference between them is instantiated.

What does this indicate for the fate of the sign? A sign also must become a sign through such transformance—the performance of saying the same thing in a different way. The sign must be situated with respect to its *syntagmatic* relations as well as its *pragmatic* (what Saussure termed associative) relations. In the process, the sign is differentiated both as a sign and as a specific sign with its specific significance (meaning) and signification (sound pattern). For example, the word "bed" is associated with the words "bet" and "bad" on the one hand, and on the other hand it is also associated with the words "bunk," "cot," and "crib." All these words are clearly different from the word "bed," but they are different in different ways. The first group is differentiated syntactically by linearly concatenating the signs, as in "the bed was bad" and "I bet my bad." However, the primary association resides in the similarity of sound patterns (or

graphic patterns) of the words: "bed" and "bet" differ on account of the last consonant. The association of these words allows us to fix what is meant by "signifier," because the string of signs are primarily differentiated with respect to the sound pattern. However, the second group of words "bed," "bunk," "crib," and "cot" are only differentiated pragmatically (associatively) *in absentia* as in the sentences "the bunk was bad" and "I bet my cot," because "bed," "bunk," and "bed" are interchangeable (at least to a certain sufficient degree). A structure of such valid substitutions would, at the limit, draw us closer to the sense—signified—of the word "bed." And it is this meaning that is similar, or even the same, across the differences between "bed," "bunk," "cot," and "crib."

Therefore, there are different pragmatic differences discernable through syntagmatic analysis. In general, we can say that there are different differences. For instance, the pairs of words "bed/sleep" and "bed/parachute" are each pragmatically related in some way. There are techniques for proper grammatical substitution. An ordinary English-speaking person, however, would say that the first word-pair is closely related, whereas the second word-pair has barely any relation at all. Moreover, the words "bed" and "sleep" are not proximate because of a direct difference between them (as "bed" and "bet" are due to the difference of 'd' and 't'). Their superficial difference is not the source of their association. Nonetheless, according to Saussure, all signs are related to each other in some way within the linguistic system. It must be that the words are brought together through their structure of differences in the larger linguistic system. But then the question arises, can the association between "bed" and "bunk" exist without the association between "bed" and "sleep?" How does, in concrete structrualist terms, "bed" and "sleep" ever come to be associated? Or is it that the referents bed and sleep are

related? That is, the actual things and states bed and sleep are related in the world, with the words deriving their association from the relation of the referents.

Beds are for sleeping in, surely this is right. Anyone familiar with sleeping in a bed will not need to perform complex structural analysis to establish some generally accepted relation between "bed" and "sleep." How this is possible is of course a big question, but without some theory of denotation structuralism is ill suited to address it. Whatever account given by structuralism of the relation between the words "bed" and "sleep,' it must be too farfetched to explain the simplicity of the relation each competent language user can provide. The main reasons why beds are related to sleeping is found in the world. Ricoeur even objects that "the semiotic definition of the sign as an inner difference between signifier and signified presupposes its semantic definition as reference to the thing for which it stands" (Ricoeur, 1976, 21). In our example, sleeping in a bed happens in a world, where beds are identified by one of their primary functions of providing sleeping quarters. One knows what a bed is by sleeping in it.

Does it mean, then, that the sign "bed" has meaning in virtue of the meaning of the thing it denotes? No. Neither does it mean that the words are related just because the things are. As Jakobson argued "against those who assign meaning (*signatum*) not to the sign, but to the thing itself, the simplest and truest argument would be that nobody has ever smelled or tasted the meaning of 'cheese' or of 'apple.' There is no *signatum* without the *signum*" (1959, 144). In other words, someone can pick out a bed in the world only with the help of signs. Things do not ordinarily come prepackaged with a meaning labeled on them like cans of soup; they are not inherently meaningful. A particular bed is a token of a general type, and it is found in the world as such with the

mediation of signs. The thing in the world, the referent of "bed," cannot be responsible

for the meaning of the sign, because it is only by means of the sign that a thing of a

certain kind can be picked out in the world. Consider that any given bed is unlike any

other bed in at least some way; all beds are different with respect to at least some feature

or property: shape, color, construction, spatial location, etc. Yet, they are also all the

same in some specific way; they are all beds.[11] It follows that, in its denotative function,

the sign suspends all those features of a thing that could differ without altering the thing's

status as a token of a specific type. The sign, not the thing, is responsible for this

operation.

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[11]   This is not to suggest that denotation works by picking out the common features of a type in the
     particular denotatum. Wittgenstein's analysis of "games" in *Philosophical Investigations* shows the
     flaw of such a view.

§ 8. Sense Without Reference

In our attempt to understand the sign, the discussion has touched on another central distinction in philosophy of language: Frege's famous distinction between *sense* and *reference*.[12] This distinction also presupposes the framework of performance of sameness-in-difference. In showing this, the first step is to recall the idea hinted at above that we never perceive a thing of a certain type for the first time (which also means that we don't perceive a *thing* for the first time). That is, one never sees a house or a chair for the first time, because one never sees it *as* a house or *as* a chair for the first time. At best, one sees it as an unidentified thing. At worst that thing does not arouse enough attention to be seen *as a thing* at all. Only after encountering many "chairs" does one come to realize that such a thing, a thing of this type, has been experienced before. In other words, sameness gradually emerges from different encounters. It is not established through comparison, because there is no *what*, no third thing, there to be compared.

In all fairness to Frege's initial outline of the distinction between sense and reference, our analysis should concentrate on proper names. Let's take as our example the proper name Moon. Suppose a student reads that the Earth has a single satellite, which orbits the Earth in a certain way (he is not told that the name of this satellite is Moon). The same student then reads a mythical account of a male deity that appears in the sky at night. This young lad does not know that the two accounts are related, that the name of the Earth's satellite is Moon, or that he was in a position to observe the Moon on countless occasions. Frege argues that for this individual the two accounts of the Moon

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12   'Reference' is itself a controversial translation of the German word 'Bedeutung'.

have very different senses but the same referent. They both refer to the self-same thing called the Moon.

Our objection is not that there is no referent, but rather that the notion of referent is untenable apart from a certain *structuration of senses*. That is, a referent—the actual moon—is an indefinite concatenation of senses and perceptions, which in turn prescribe certain potential experiences. To see the point, consider two individuals, with our young student being one of them, meeting on the street in the evening. The other individual says to the student "Moon." The proper name has neither sense nor reference for the student. He does not know to look at the sky, nor what to make of the utterance. If on the other hand, he is told that the deity he read about is named Moon, then the other gentleman's remark will have both a sense and a reference. This reference will not be the "Earth's satellite," since the boy does not yet know that that is called Moon, but the reference will be a mythological entity in a mythical world. At this stage there is no objective self-sameness to even speak of.

Our criticism of Frege's sense/reference distinction pinpoints Husserl's divergence from Frege. Whereas Frege is willing to relegate referents to an independent sphere of being, Husserl affirms that "intuition and intuited, perception and perceived physical thing are, more particularly, essentially interrelated but, as a matter of essential necessity, are not really inherently and essentially one and combined" (Husserl, 1913, 86). Thus, Husserl acknowledges the distinction between "the mode of meaning" and "the meant," the sense and the reference, but at the same time proposes that the two are "essentially interrelated." The referent, the thing meant or perceived, is "there as the same for the seizing-upon consciousness which synthetically unites memory and new perception as the

same, despite any interruption of the continuous course of actional perception" (Husserl 87). According to Husserl, the intended object is a certain synthesis of different modes of perceiving that are interconnected by a certain consistency of the adumbrations. A table, for example, is experienced in continuously different ways as one looks it over and walks around it. Each time it is adumbrated to some extent. Yet, it is the same table because of the coordination of the modes of intending. Husserl, of course, addresses perception exclusively, but, to the extent that Frege's distinction straddles the spheres of language and perception, Husserl's argument applies.

The argument is no less than a reformulation of the notion of "referent." The referent cannot be restricted to "the actual entity picked out by an utterance," because a referent [*Bedeutung*] in Frege's sense can very well be an imaginary character. Each of the following utterances relays a different sense while sharing the same referent: "daughter of Oedipus and Jocasta," "sister of Polynices," "girl who disobeyed the king of Thebes" and "character in Sophocles's tragedies." All four utterances are meaningful (relay a sense) in a different way, yet refer to or, better yet, intend the same imaginary individual— Antigone. The referent of "Antigone" possesses all the characteristics that for Frege describe what a referent is, except that Antigone cannot be encountered in the way one can encounter the Moon. Antigone must be encountered through literature or art. Nevertheless, the proper name Antigone serves to connect a multitude of senses. Together this structure of senses makes possible truth-value designations. Claiming that Antigone killed her father Oedipus would be false, even though the play never directly refutes this claim. In any case, there is certainly a referent corresponding to "Antigone."

The proper name accumulates senses and thereby becomes more meaningful. By

linking different instances of the same thing using the proper name, the referent of the

proper name emerges as a web of just such interlinking ways of speaking differently

about the same. The more senses are linked together, the more elaborate is the structure

to which the name Moon or Antigone refer. In Ricoeur's words, "the speaker refers to

something on the basis of, or through, the ideal structure of the sense" (Ricoeur, 1976,

20). Identity is constructed or always in construction rather than discovered or

recognized. Thus, the truth-value of a proposition, which is another way of talking about

reference (Frege 157), is an indication of a certain relation between senses.

Of course, we still must address Frege's account directly. For him, the referent is the

actual object (thing) in the world (Frege 153). Without ridiculing the constricted concept

of world here implied, and following the spirit of Frege article, we can say that without a

certain connection between language and world (in Frege's sense) the proper name would

be both senseless and referentless. What is this connection? It is what Charles S. Peirce

called an index. According to Peirce, something is an index of something else when it has

a physical connection to that something. Thus, a bullet hole is an instance of an index,

because it indicates the gunshot. An index is a species of signs and is essential for the

operation of symbols (which all linguistic signs are). The point is that the utterances

"satellite of Earth" or "cosmic object appearing at night in either circular or crescent

shape" will never make contact with the world and draw out the experience of the Moon.

An indexical sign must be mixed-in to allow for the particular experience.

Some of the essential indices that operate within language are 'I/you,' 'here/there,'

'now/before,' etc. They situate the utterance in which they appear in terms of the

contextual instance within which the utterance appears. "This constant and necessary

reference to the instance of discourse constitutes the feature that unites to *I/you* a series of 'indicators' which, from their form and their systematic capacity, belong to different classes, some being pronouns, others adverbs, and still others, adverbial locutions" (Benveniste 218). Like the bullet hole, the sense of the word "I" is uniquely linked to the event of utterance of this word. The sign is physically connected to the utterance itself. Hence, in order for the proper name Moon to ever refer—prescribe an experience[13]—the sense of an utterance, in which the proper name occurs, must at some point also involve an index. In concrete terms, the individual chatting with our student must say something like "hey [you], take a look at that bright Moon up there [now] in the sky." No less then two explicit (*that* and *there*) and two implicit (*you* and *now*) indices appear in this utterance, thereby directly translating symbols, which other words including Moon are, into experience. The importance of this indicative function cannot be underestimated. The problem indices serve to solve is "none other than that of intersubjective communication. Language has solved this problem by creating an ensemble of 'empty' signs that are nonreferentia with respect to 'reality'" (Benveniste 219). These signs are indices and are required by the sense/reference binary.

It is precisely by translating sense into experience or experience into sense with the use of indices that Frege's distinction between sense and reference can obtain at all. By using different ways of talking about the same thing, a person is primed to be able to experience a particular type of thing. In turn, by experiencing the same thing in different ways one enriches the senses in which that thing may be spoken of. As with language so with perception (experience), identity is not prior to the movement of translation.

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[13]   It should be understood that the words 'reality' and 'world' are used in the sense most generous to Frege's positivistic tilt. The argument is conducted on his terms.

Here, we are broaching some fundamental philosophical questions that have long and complicated histories. It appears that our inquiry is spilling over even further beyond the constrained circle we outlined for translation. But this again is warranted. Firstly, our formulation of translation as performance of sameness-in-difference anticipated this kind of trespass into questions of ontology and perception. It is for this reason that *performance* has factored into the formulation. Performance, besides upholding the original dynamic connotation of "bearing across," suggests an activity whereby the performer's creativity is neither wholly free nor wholly determined by the given. Like the translator, the musician performs a musical piece and thereby both creates it as well as simply executes the musical piece prefigured in the score. Similarly, in perception, a person performs the given: phenomena are neither independent of nor wholly determined by the perceiver. Bringing up translation in this context is justified by invoking the third type of translation outlined by Jakobson, which he named *intersemiotic* translation.

In the final analysis, how does sense and reference imply translation? Firstly, reference is established by saying the same thing in different ways. Therefore, the same source which makes *intralingual* translation necessary also makes possible the referential possibilities of language. One repeats and hears the same utterance in different contexts and world situations; as a result the words become meaningful as a structure of differences of these situations. In turn, the situations acquire a sameness in virtue of the sameness of the utterance. In the entire scenario, the importance of performance cannot be overemphasized. A word is not meaningful because the same reference is recognized in each instance the word is used; nor is the reference identifiable in each situation because the sign picks it out. Rather, both the sense and the reference are nothing more

than the flow of the performance—fluid movement between different instances of usage.

II.

§ 9. Dialectics of Translation in Romantic Germany

The idea that the act, the performance, of translation conditions and stages meaning

in a way we have been suggesting is not unprecedented, and goes back to the German

Romantic tradition. It is precisely the interpretation that Berman gives to Novalis's

paradoxical statement in a letter of 1797 to A. W. Schlegel that "the German Shakespeare

today is better than the English" (Berman 105). Novalis is frontally claiming that A. W.

Schlegel's translation of Shakespeare is better than the original work of Shakespeare

himself. To clarify this scandalous remark, Berman explains the underlying Romantic

theories of translation, on which Novalis's statement is based, in the following way:

> This genetic and philological mime [the translation] …
> constitutes the original, through its very movement, into a
> *potentiation* … The original itself, in what the Romantics call its
> 'tendency,' possesses an *a priori* scope: the Idea of the Work
> which the work wants to be, tends toward, but empirically never
> is … Now, translation aims precisely at this Idea, this origin of
> the original. Through this aim, it necessarily produces a 'better'
> text than the first, if only because the movement constituted by
> the passage from one language to another—the *Übersetzung*—
> has necessarily distanced, removed the work by force from the
> initial empirical layer that separated it from its own Idea
> (Berman 107).

According to the Romantic conception of the work, the transcendent meaning of a literary

text emerges in the translation. Therefore, far from being contingent, translation is

necessitated by the original work itself. The life of a literary text involves translation as

its necessary stage, which equals the event of writing the original to the second power.

"The work is that linguistic production which calls for translation as a destiny of its own"

(Berman 126). Clearly, for the Romantics, the meaning of the work must be performed

through continual interpretation, translation, and criticism. We may say that for the Romantics the movement of translation was prefigured in the original.[14]

As was previously suggested, one reason for translation's essential role in the life of the text is that the meaning of the work emerges with the performance of sameness-in-difference. Another reason for the high esteem for translation in Romantic Germany is what Berman, in an adaptation from Hölderlin, calls the "encounter with the foreign," which is the central theme running through Berman's book. This idea is developed in the Romantic tradition, and rigorously worked out by Hegel in the guise of the dialectic movement of Spirit and the concept of *Bildung*. Translation can be viewed as a journey of self-formation (*Bildung*) from the immediate ground of the mother tongue toward the foreign and alien language of the original. "For translation, indeed, starts from what is one's own, the same (the known, the familiar, the quotidian), in order to go towards the foreign, the other (the unknown, the miraculous, the *Unheimliche*), and, starting from this experience, to return to its point of departure" (Berman 46). This journey culminates in a return to the native soil of one's language and culture, but transformed and rejuvenated by the encounter with the other. Thus, translation is a passage of self-realization through the other. It is in this light that one must understand Novalis claim about the German translation of Shakespeare. For the Romantic Germany of late 18th and early 19th century, translation was imperative precisely because of this conception of *Bildung* (culture). The drive for translation was part of a larger vision of German language and the German national identity expressed by great figures like Goethe, F. Schlegel, Novalis, and Schleiermacher, among others.

The same dialectical logic applies to the literary work itself. The original text is not

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[14] As will be discussed later, the same idea is echoed by Benjamin's essay *The Task of the Translator*.

fully realized until it too takes the journey toward the foreign language through translation. Words and expressions, idioms and cultural references must be reinvigorated through the distantiation provided by translation. This view was initially articulated by Goethe with most force and insight. He wrote "in the end every literature grows bored if it is not refreshed by foreign participation" and "the most beautiful metempsychosis is that in which we see ourselves reappear in another" (Berman 65). No matter how innovative an original text is, in time, its language becomes common and loses its depth and opacity; and with this loss, the text also loses its affective power. Translation alone, as an encounter with the foreign, has the capacity to restore the "face of wonder" of the work (Berman 67) and provide it with an afterlife.

Underlying the Romantic theories of translation, and in fact the dialectic logic itself, is a radical position that the self is not immediately known to itself. That is, in the case of translation, the native language must encounter the foreign because it is hidden from itself (from its users). The language is not hiding, but rather it is out in the open in such a way that it constitutes the open.[15] Because language is the medium and environment of culture and of human persons, its opacity and depth disappears as a result of the language's constant presence. In other words, the opacity and particularity of one's language dissolves into transparency since it is through this very language that we look. Similarly, the self extends indefinitely outward and dissolves into nothingness unless it encounters the other—that which is foreign to its self.

With this dialectical position regarding the text, self, culture, and language, arose a series of problems that impressed their urgency on the Romantic thinkers. "What is a work? What is the meaning of this 'philological' proliferation surrounding the work … of

texts of second degree—notes, fragments, critiques, commentaries, quotations,

translations—all these circles of texts surrounding the work … What is the meaning,

outside of the idealist dialectic, of this movement of 'potentiation' which begins with the

work and is continued by criticism on the one side and translation on the other?" (Berman

128). Because the meaning of the text is not disclosed by the text itself, is alien to it, the

text relinquishes autonomy and self-identity. As a result, circularity emerges that throws

doubt on the project of objective methods of translation or criticism. The origin of either

endeavor cannot be established at the start. That is, the literary work acquires its identity

and significance from beyond itself in criticism and translation. At the same time, the

origin of translation and of criticism is prefigured in the work itself. A fundamental

paradox develops in that the more translatable a work is, the more untranslatable it is also

(Berman 127). The more tension the work has in relation to its own language the more it

necessitates translation while also making such translation increasingly impossible.

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[15]   Here the "open" should be understood in Heidegger's sense of the clearing, or openness of Being.

§ 10. Translation as Hermeneutics

The approaches to translation developed in Romantic Germany enter upon a fundamental circularity, a circularity that prefigures 20th century hermeneutic theory. With regard to translation, we arrive at the following question in this same spirit. How does one begin to translate? What is the first step in the performance that is translation? These questions appear strange if translation means transporting (carrying over) the meaning from one idiom into another one. But if the meaning, the essential structure of the text, is not entrenched in the text as if it were a golden nugget waiting to be uncovered, and if, as has been argued, the very distinctions between signifier and signified and between sense and reference must be performed, then our questions take up a central place and impress on us their urgency. With all its imposing singular solidity, how does one even approach the original utterance (text or sentence) when "the foreign text towers up like a lifeless block of resistance to translation" (Ricoeur, 2004, 5)? If there is no "what," no given meaning, prior to the performance of translation, then how does the translator at once constitute and reconstitute meaning in the translationary act?

These are the very problems of hermeneutics. Meaning, sense, and the world of the text are not independent of its encounter with the reader. That is, the act of interpretation is not posterior to the constitution of meaning, but neither is it solely responsible for its creation (Gadamer, 1960, 473). Translation is in this very same predicament: the translator does not create a new text with a new structure, but neither are the directions for translation somehow embodied in the original text. There is a constrained freedom in translation as there is in interpretation. We must grant that these

are not separate phenomena which coincidentally happen to pose the same difficulties. Rather, interpretation and translation are closely related. Firstly, translation directly implies interpretation. "Here no one can doubt that the translation of a text, however much the translator may have dwelt with and empathized with his author, cannot be simply a re-awakening of the original process in the writer's mind; rather, it is necessarily a re-creation of the text guided by the way the translator understands what it says. No one can doubt that what we are dealing with here is interpretation, and not simply reproduction" (Gadamer, 1960, 386). This much is clear: translating a text requires interpretation—an understanding of what the text says.

What is not so apparent, however, is whether interpretation precedes translation, and is separable from it. In other words, are there interpretations that are not also translations as well? Both translation and interpretation involve some of the same elements. For example, it was pointed out previously that translation involves a negative operation; the translator is not coping, compensating, or avoiding loss, but rather determines it and creates it. Translation is foremost a production of differences: between signifier and signified, between different pragmatic differences, and between what is important and what can be lost. Interpretation implies this same process. Gadamer writes that "in our translation if we want to emphasize a feature of the original that is important to us, then we can do so only by playing down or entirely suppressing other features. But this is precisely the activity that we call interpretation. Translation, like all interpretation, is a highlighting … The situation of the translator and that of the interpreter are fundamentally the same" (1960, 386). According to Gadamer, both phenomena have a dialogical structure—a back and forth movement of question and answer which underlies

any fruitful conversation. Furthermore, Gadamer remarks that translation between foreign

languages is just an "extreme case of hermeneutical difficulty" (1960, 387). Still, despite

these common elements, the question of whether translation is just an instance of

interpretation, or whether interpretation and translation coincide is left open.

With regard to this problem, Umberto Eco, after an analysis of Jakobson's essay

on translation, concludes that translation is a species of the genus "interpretation" (Eco,

1998, 80). Eco cites examples of interpretation which outstrip what one would in good

conscience wish to call translation. For instance, "anyone who summarized the *Divine

Comedy* in English by saying that it is 'a powerful and fascinating representation of the

destiny of human souls in Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise' would certainly be providing a

succinct interpretation of the entire poem, perhaps maintaining that only in such a way

could its deep nature be expressed, but, once again, it would be pure (and not very

perspicuous) rhetorical license to call it a translation" (1998, 76-77). Similarly, rewording

an utterance by replacing each word by its dictionary definition would make, in certain

cases, for a suitable interpretation, but not a suitable translation. In general, "if the

concept of interpretation is to be assumed in its widest sense (and its semiotic fecundity

makes this advisable), it is clear that translation, at least in the sense of interlinguistic

translation, is only a very limited type of interpretation" (Eco, 1998, 76). Thus, Eco

definitively answers that interpretation is not coincident with translation because some

instances of interpretation simply are not also instances of translation.

Yet Eco fails to consider one important caveat. There are better or worse

translations, or perhaps we can say more or less relevant translations, and there are more

or less relevant (or interesting) interpretations. This much may be admitted without

committing to objective interpretation or perfect translation. But if some translations are better than others, then summarizing the *Divine Comedy* in the way Eco suggests could be considered a bad (irrelevant) translation. It is certainly, at least, a limited interpretation. Similarly, rewording a poem by substituting each word with its dictionary definition can still be considered a translation, but a bad one. And to be consistent, Eco would have to admit that the rewording would be a bad interpretation as well. The objection, then, is this: at what point does a translation go from being bad to not being a translation at all. The question is not easily answered, and Eco does not address it in *Experiences in Translation*.[16]

Eco's insightful examples seem to show that some cases of tolerable interpretation are at the same time cases of bad translation. Yet, to consider something a bad instance of something else there needs to be a criterion for determining a good example of that same something. Well, but is not this the trouble in the first place. What is a "good" instance of translation versus a "bad" instance? Doesn't it depend on the task at hand? Is the translator trying to bring a foreign text to the reader of another language, or is the aim to paraphrase in order to better understand a poem? These questions only highlight the difficulties in comprehending the phenomenon. Eco's assignment of translation as a species of interpretation is premature; their relation must be sought on a deeper level.[17]

To address the relation between interpretation and translation, we must return to our framework of performance of sameness-in-difference. It is natural to ask in what way is interpretation also, as is translation, a performance of sameness-in-difference? In order to approach the question comprehensively, it may be addressed in stages. Firstly, in what

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[16]   Neither does Eco address the issue in *The Search for a Perfect Language*.
[17]   Antoine Berman asserts the opposite thesis that translation outstrips interpretation (Berman, 170).

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sense, if at all, does interpretation imply a performance? Gadamer says that "all performance is interpretation" (400). These two concepts, performance and interpretation, are fundamentally the same because understanding is their motivating ground. Just as acting out a play or performing a musical piece is a mode of understanding the artwork, so interpreting a text or utterance takes place in a hermeneutical situation underpinned by the attempt to understand. "Interpreting music or a play by performing it is not basically different from understanding a text by reading it: understanding always includes interpretation" (Gadamer, 1960, 399). Both instances are linguistic through and through in the sense of presupposing and occurring in the medium of language—mediated by a system of signs. In this sense, performance is a kind of externalized interpretation. The performer, no less than an interpreter, enters into the world of the utterance (text, musical piece, dance, painting, etc.) "assimilating what is said to the point that it becomes one's own" (Gadamer, 1960, 398)—which is what understanding is in its proper sense.

Still, one may object, that the idea of performance suggests a dynamic act, which is difficult to reconcile with the solitary, internalized act of understanding. But this view of understanding is mistaken; it construes interpretation as a receptive process, at best, an act of discovery of a preexisting meaning. To see interpretation, and ultimately understanding, in this light misses the crucial role that *application*, as discussed by Gadamer, plays in hermeneutics. Gadamer first points out that philological, legal, and theological hermeneutics were closely related and made up the "full concept of hermeneutics" up to the 18th and 19th centuries (Gadamer, 1960, 308). What united these spheres was the fact that hermeneutics involved applying the text. This idea is evident in the case of legal and theological hermeneutics most of all because "the text, whether law

or gospel, if it is to be understood properly—i.e., according to the claim it makes—must be understood at every moment, in every concrete situation, in a new and different way. Understanding here is always application" (Gadamer, 1960, 309). Asking what a law or gospel means seeks an answer in terms of conduct in a specific situation; and understanding these texts means being affected in one's conduct. Moreover, it is not an equivocation to identify understanding with application in these instances. There is no intermediary state where the meaning is understood and is awaiting to be applied. Rather, there is a single process of understanding, which manifests as application in the final stage (Gadamer, 1960, 310).

Gadamer argues that application is central in the case of philological hermeneutics as well. "When we consider that translating texts in a foreign language, imitating them, or even reading text aloud correctly, involves the same explanatory achievement as a philological interpretation, so that the two things become as one, then we cannot avoid the conclusion that the suggested distinction between cognitive, normative, and reproductive interpretation has no fundamental validity, but all three constitute one unitary phenomenon" (Gadamer, 1960, 310). This insight may be generalized over every kind of understanding. In fact, we have encountered the point before in the discussion of sense and reference. Strictly speaking, to understand something *as* a something of a certain kind means seeing past its peculiarities, its differences, and seeing that thing in its universality, in its sameness, from the perspective of a particular situation. The whole event of understanding must be seen together as a singular performance, with application reciprocally guiding this performance throughout. Therefore, Gadamer concludes that "application is neither a subsequent nor merely an occasional part of the phenomenon of

understanding, but codetermines it as a whole from the beginning" (Gadamer, 1960, 324).

Application, as a necessary aspect of understanding and interpretation, makes interpretation performative in the way translation is also. Both phenomena involve a concretization of a universal in a particular, which is another way of talking about application or realisation. But even more importantly, it must be stressed once again, that the meaning of a text is not first given or extracted unequivocally and then applied to some situation. Instead, the universal feature is embodied in the particular situation through the performance. Only then does the "same," the universal, emerge in the process of going from the original text to the translated one. The "same" is that which is repeated in different situations, and exists only as repeatable. Hence, interpretation and translation are two instances of the same fundamental phenomenon; not because translation involves interpretation or, as Eco suggests, because translation is a species of the genus interpretation, but because of the underlying phenomenon of performance of sameness-in-difference, which anchors both interpretation and translation as cases of understanding. If we are to invoke the talk of species and genus at all, then it would be best to say that interpretation and translation are both species of a single genus, with relatively minor differences separating the two.

How can these ideas be cashed out pragmatically? Imagine a teacher explaining how to add fractions to a student. After taking some time with the lesson, the teacher wants to verify the students understanding of the topic and so asks the student to explain, in the student's own words, how to add fractions. If the student is able to perform this task, it will serve as a demonstration of her understanding. But notice that it is essential for the student to *reword* the explanation. If the student just quotes verbatim the teacher's

explanation, then it won't serve as a suitable demonstration at all. After all, the student might have simply parroted the teacher's words. Instead, the student must translate the teacher's explanation into her own words. On the basis of the student's formulations— her decisions about what must be emphasized, what relations are central to the explanation, and which aspects of the teacher's explanation can be lost without altering the meaning of what was said—the teacher can see that the student actually understands. For example, if the teacher says that "lowest common denominator must be found in order to add fractions" and the student, in her explanation, says that "a lowest common multiple must be found between the denominators," then in saying the same thing in a different way the student demonstrates that she knows how to add fractions. Similarly, the student may simply take a particular example and solve it. Again, this would be a performance of sameness-in-difference. The student realises, through solving an actual problem, the meaning of the teacher's explanation. The meaning becomes detachable from the sounds of the teacher's voice throughout the process of translation. Our example describes in concrete terms Ricoeur's statement that "to understand is not merely to repeat the speech event in a similar event, it is to generate a new event beginning from the text in which the initial event has been objectified" (Ricoeur, 1976, 75).

The example is familiar enough that it presents little trouble for our imaginations. Sure, the student 'demonstrates' that she understands how to add fractions by performing the actual calculation or rephrasing the explanation; there is nothing puzzling about that. But caution must be taken when using this word "demonstration." It covers up the tracks of a deeply rooted assumption. We say that the student "demonstrates" her understanding as if the demonstration is something separate and independent from the act of

understanding itself. But if the previous discussion of application is taken seriously, then this conception of demonstration simply won't do. The student doesn't first understand and then try to apply or demonstrate her understanding. "Let us remember, rather, that understanding always includes an element of application and thus produces an ongoing process of concept formation" (Gadamer, 1960, 403). Thus, a newly found disposition toward application just *is* understanding. Understanding is not merely some mental process like a light going off in one's head (Wittgenstein 152-154). Granted the outward application of one's understanding may be delayed or suspended, but this does not undermine the proposed view of understanding. What is important is that it is nonsense to say that one completely understands an utterance, yet is unable to restate that utterance in one's own words. The extent to which one is able to reword an utterance is commensurate with one's understanding of that utterance. In other words, to understand implies an ability to translate.

Understanding, then, has the fundamental structure of translation in the sense of "carrying across." "Understanding," writes Gadamer, "is to be thought of less as a subjective act than as participating in an event of tradition, a process of transmission in which past and present are constantly mediated" (Gadamer, 1960, 290). There is a movement from the given situation toward application. This movement takes place through differentiation: highlighting certain aspects of the initial situation and losing certain others. Throughout this negation, the given is reconstituted in another form—this is the moment of application. We have referred to this process as performance, rather than construction or creation, because it is not a fully volitional act on the part of the subject, but neither is it wholly determined. Translation is creative, but not itself creation.

§ 11. Peirce's Semiotics

In looking at translation as a performance, as necessarily involving an element of application and appropriation, the hermeneutical approach converges and intersects with Peirce's theory of the sign. Of course, Peirce's semiotics is entangled with his categories, which in turn underpin his pragmatic methods as well as inform his views on reasoning. Because these areas of Peirce's thought are so interrelated and systematic, yet never fully worked out in a single comprehensive work, it is imperative to keep focused on those features of his thought that will help elucidate our topic of translation and connect up to the hermeneutic approach.

Toward this end, we begin with several quotes from Peirce that bear directly on translation and his conception of the sign. Firstly, "what does it mean to speak of the 'interpretation' of a sign? Interpretation is merely another word for translation" (1998, 388) and secondly "'meaning,' which is, in its primary acceptation, the translation of a sign into another system of signs" (CP:4.127); and finally "thought, however, is in itself essentially of the nature of a sign. But a sign is not a sign unless it translates itself into another sign in which it is more fully developed. Thought requires achievement for its own development, and without this development it is nothing. Thought must live and grow in incessant new and higher translations, or it proves itself not to be genuine thought" (CP:5.594).[18] From here we can move ahead to figure out what Peirce meant. On first approximation, by "sign" Peirce meant "something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity" (1940, 99). To flush out this approximation,

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[18] Dewey cites this passage in his paper on Peirce (Dewey, 91), and Jakobson, in turn, cites Dewey in

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Peirce introduces a triadic partition involved in the signifying function of the sign. First, there is the Sign itself (also called the *representamen*), the "something" in the initial approximation. Second, there is the Object which the sign represents, the "for something." Third, there is the Interpretant, the "in some respect or capacity."[19] Understanding this Third aspect will be central for understanding Peirce's statements regarding interpretation and translation.

The linguistic entities over whose translation we have been puzzling are called Symbols by Peirce. They include words, sentences, and texts; we have previously used the umbrella term "utterance" to refer to these linguistic entities. For Peirce, symbols represent a species of signs, as contrasted with two other species: icons, and indices. It should be pointed out that what Saussure undertook to study under the heading of *sign* does not correspond to Peirce's use of the same term. If a comparison is to be made, then, roughly, the Saussurean *sign* corresponds to what Peirce called *symbol*. The main similarity between the theories of these two thinkers is reflected in the belief that language is essentially reflexive. For Saussure signs derive their value strictly from their relation to (their difference from) other signs within a system, and for Peirce as well, symbols are meaningful in virtue of their relation to other symbols. Thus, for both thinkers, language is inherently self-referential and reflexive.

The important divergence between Saussure and Peirce, however, is in their view of the relations underlying signs. As has been previously discussed, for Saussure, signs are characterized exclusively through differences. In contrast, within Peirce's semiotics,

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reference to Peirce in his paper on translation.

[19]   The order of introduction of the triadic division is very significant. In fact, Peirce refers to them as First, Second, and Third because of their correspondence with his categories that he also calls First, Second, and Third. Consequently, these (firstness, secondness, and thirdness) become technical

symbols grow (Peirce, 1940, 115). And in particular, "it is only out of symbols that a new symbol can grow" (1940, 115). This somewhat ambiguous statement can be clarified by connecting it to the original statement about translation that we are attempting to elucidate. To say that symbols grow is precisely what Peirce meant by saying that linguistic signs must be translated into other signs in order to be meaningful. Firstly linguistic signs are symbols, and it is symbols that Peirce talks of in his statements regarding translation. This point is clarified by Dewey when he qualifies Peirce's statement "a 'sign is not a sign'—in the linguistic sense—unless it 'translates itself into another sign in which it is more fully developed'" (Dewey 91). Hence, that symbols grow means that there is a flux of symbols, with each successive sign allotting significance to each previous one. The successive sign, in the case of symbols, is another symbol which serves as the *interpretant* of that symbol. We make a full circle to clarify what this Third term is in Peirce's triadic partition of the sign. By *interpretant* Peirce means the unfolding of the flux of signification. Dewey writes "the interpretant, in Peirce's usage, is always and necessarily another linguistic sign—or, better, set of such signs … in the sequential movement of signs … the meaning of the earlier ones in the series is provided by or constituted by the later ones in their interpretants" (Dewey 87). In simple terms, an interpretant of an utterance is the other utterance it engenders; it is what is uttered next in the sequence of signs.

For Peirce, then, there is always only a series of signs—an interpretative continuum. Furthermore, thought itself is just such a continuum and is always instantiated in signs. It is enough to mention that Peirce explicitly held this view regarding thought in order to demonstrate that for Peirce a private language and consequently a private interpretation

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terms for Peirce and for all subsequent literature on Peirce's thought.

were nonsensical. It is in connection to this view of Peirce that Jakobson writes "how many fruitless discussions about mentalism and anti-mentalism would be avoided if one approached the notion of meaning in terms of translation" (Jakobson, 1977, 1029). With this thesis in place, the parallel between Peirce's semiotics and Gadamer's hermeneutics becomes better defined. Application in Gadamer's sense converges on what Peirce meant by *interpretant*. That is, the understanding of an utterance necessarily involves furtherance of activity. To understand a sign—to have it be meaningful—coincides with going on to produce more signs, which is another way of understanding application.

How does all this relate to translation? To answer this question we must look back at Peirce's statements quoted above. "Meaning," Peirce writes "is, in its primary acceptation, the translation of a sign into another system of signs." Clearly, according to Peirce, meaning is not prior to translation, it is translation. He goes on to write that "a sign is not a sign unless it translates itself into another sign in which it is more fully developed." With this last pronouncement we can further connect Peirce's views with our model of performance of sameness-in-difference. That the translationary flux—the growth of signs—is performative is clear from what has already been said. But from clarifying the phrase "translates itself into another sign in which it is more fully developed" we can discern sameness-in-difference. The "other sign," the interpretant, is a different sign that nonetheless continues the thought, the sense of the previous sign. It is different but also the same enough and relevant enough to develop the previous sign. As we saw with the referent of Moon or Antigone, by saying different things about the same, the referent is developed as a structuration of senses. In the final analysis, signs exist as undergoing reiteration of the same in the different—as undergoing translation.

§ 12. Walter Benjamin and *The Task of the Translator*

Thus far we have said nothing that Benjamin has not already said in his essay *The Task of the Translator*. All we have done is translated the translation of that work—an impossible aim according to Benjamin himself (262). Perhaps the only significant difference is the following elaboration on the very claim that the present work is a translation of Benjamin's essay. According to Benjamin, a good translation is one that brings a work of art—a text—to fame in its afterlife. In proper translations "the life of the original attains its latest, continually renewed, and most complete unfolding" (Benjamin 255). We have seen this point with the German Romantics as well as with Ricoeur's analysis of metaphor. In this light, the live metaphor is not killed by translation, but rather it is brought into its afterlife by it. The metaphor enters common usage when the same thing is said in a different way. Similarly, for the text, translation performs the text and thereby gives it continuity—gives it an afterlife. Moreover, we should not be at all surprised by the kinship of Benjamin's thought with that of the German Romantics of the 19th century. After all, he is their direct descendent.

In previous sections (specifically this question was raised in section four) we asked about the linguistic role of translation. It stands to reason that Benjamin's account of the task of the translator should take us along the path to answering this question. Benjamin writes that "translation is so far removed from being the sterile equation of two dead languages that of all literary forms it is the one charged with the special mission of watching over the maturing process of the original language and the birth pangs of its own" (Benjamin 256). Together with the previous quote, Benjamin's views intertwine in

an interesting way with those of Peirce, Gadamer, and Ricoeur. In translation, meaning

bears itself across time—it unfolds in continuous reiteration of the same within different

occurrences. The organic (vitalist) metaphors of life, birth, maturation, rebirth, growth,

death, afterlife, and rejuvenation all suggest an unfolding life-flux of translation.

Coincidentally, recall that for Peirce signs grow and for Ricoeur metaphors live and die.

And for both philosophers each process is embodied in translation. Benjamin, as well,

aligns himself against the conception of static meaning and the "sterile equation of two

dead languages."

For Benjamin, all languages share a deep kinship, a familial tie, which constitutes

each individual language in its individuality. Contrary to Steiner's interpretation of

Benjamin's phrase "pure language" as referring to a "third active presence" (Steiner 67),[20]

this kinship is not attributed to a single historical origin, a singular structure, or a set of

universal and ideal linguistic laws. "Rather, all suprahistorical kinship between languages

consists in this: in every one of them as a whole, one and the same thing is meant. Yet

this one thing is achievable not by any single language but only by the totality of their

intentions supplementing one another: the pure language" (Benjamin 257). We can take

from this that the same meaning striven for by each language is not prior to the actual

unfolding of language; instead, this meaning must be "achieved" by the totality of the

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[20] Steiner attributes Benjamin's views to a Gnostic, Kabbalistic tradition. We are not here challenging
    this assertion, but rather Steiner's interpretation of where this tradition leads Benjamin. It is crucial
    to note that Steiner translates Benjamin as referring to a "universal language," whereas in the
    English translation (edited by M. Bullock) the same term is translated as "pure language." This
    difference in translations is significant in light of Eco's distinction between a "perfect" and a
    "universal" language. A perfect language need not be universal and a universal language may
    actually be imperfect in many respects. "It is perhaps nothing more than our 'democratic' illusion to
    imagine that perfection must imply universality" (Eco, 1995, 190). According to Eco's distinction, it
    is hard to reconcile the secretive Kabbalistic tradition, from which Benjamin drew his inspiration,
    with the idea of a democratic, universal language. "Pure language" is a better translation of
    Benjamin.

intentions of many (perhaps all) languages.

How does Benjamin explain this bold assertion? By proposing, in his own way, what we have throughout called "performance of sameness-in-difference." Benjamin suggests that the way of meaning something is unique to each language and differs between languages, but the intended meaning is the same. "In the individual unsupplemented languages, what is meant is never found in relative independence … until it is able to emerge as the pure language from the harmony of all the various ways of meaning" (257). We translate this statement by reverting back to the discussion of structuralism. By "relative independence" of what is meant we can understand the separation of signifier from signified. The concept, the meaning, signified by the word or sentence does not lift off of or emerge from the material particularity of the signifier. Only after a diversity of ways of meaning come to supplement each other does the pure meaning arise. Thus, the "pure language" of Benjamin is not equivalent to the perfect, pre-Babalian language, as discussed by Eco in *The Search for the Perfect Language*, or the universal Leibnizian language (Derrida, 1985, 201), but the pure language points to the kinship of languages. The pure language exists *between* languages as performance of translation.

The kinship of languages resides in their common intention of a pure language, where the letter and the meaning are one. As Husserl, operating in the same tradition of intentionality as Benjamin, suggests that the thing intended in perception arises as a system of modes of intending, so too Benjamin employs the same idea in *The Task of the Translator*. The differences between languages and within one language, different ways of saying the same, supplement each other to form a play of differences. Pure language is the limit of this play of differences. "Owing to translation, in other words to this

linguistic supplementarity by which one language gives to another what it lacks, and gives it harmoniously, this crossing of languages assures the growth of languages" (Derrida, 1985, 202). The task of the translator, in conjunction with the role of translation, is to watch-over and cultivate language, to make sure that it continues to mean. Translators are the gardeners of language who labor in cooperation with the sowers—the poets—to ensure the survival of language. Whereas the poet plants the seeds of novelty by stretching the possibilities of meaning, the translator preserves and bears meaning along through reiteration of the same in the different.[21]

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[21] One may object that certain translations innovate. For example, Luther's translation of the *Bible* did not merely rejuvenate the German language but gave it life in the first place. But this objection is misplaced. Did Luther's *Bible* also perform a poetic role? Yes. This contribution should not be attributed to the translation alone while disregarding the poetic contribution of the original text.

§ 13. Speech, Language, and the Role of Translation

Towards the end of our work, we find ourselves in a perplexing situation. In section four, we adopted Ricoeur's distinction between live and dead metaphor to focus the discussion of translation. The two types of metaphor stood on either side of the boundary between the translatable and the untranslatable, which also marked the boundary between the diachronic linguistic innovation and the synchronic system of signs. We traced out the path from live to sedimented (dead) metaphor and found that, according to Ricoeur, from linguistic polysemy arises an innovative speech event that then enters common usage and becomes part of language. As a result, we were then able to map translation on the synchronic axis. By allowing us to place translation within the structuralist paradigm, this initial result subsequently proved very fruitful.

Now, however, this same result appears to conflict with our later conclusions. Time and again we stressed that translation is a performance of sameness-in-difference. That it is a dynamic act whereby meaning bears itself through the performance of constituting the same in the different. It is hard to reconcile this view with the previous claim that translation lies on the synchronic axis. Performance is clearly temporal in an important, logical sense. Therefore, while translation is instantiation of the same structure in a different medium, it is also temporal and so diachronic.

One way to reconcile these seemingly contradictory claims is to revert to the previous point that the difference between structure and its material manifestation is itself parasitic on translation. This point is simply the extension of the previous argument regarding the signifier/signified distinction. But there is something lacking in this

response. More needs to be said about the speech/language distinction in relation to translation.

We have said with Ricoeur that live metaphor is an event that exploits polysemy to extend language. It brings into tension several seemingly irreconcilable interpretations of a metaphorical utterance (a sentence). Metaphor shakes up the linguistic system. But in order to complete its cycle, metaphor, as a speech event, must return to language. That is, metaphor must die in order to continue to subsist in its afterlife as part of the linguistic system. Another way of saying this is that the metaphor must be understood by others. Otherwise, a private metaphor will evaporate without leaving a mark on language. In that case, if metaphor must be understood in order to subsist in an ossified (dead) state, then it means that it must be translated. Understanding, we argued, involves performance of sameness-in-difference. Therefore, when Ricoeur says that only dead metaphor of substitution is translatable, we must take this to mean that it is made dead by translation. Translation is the condition of metaphor's death.

What we see now then is that our earlier alignment of translation with language as opposed to speech was shortsighted. Translation does not stand entrenched on one side of the divide, and neither does metaphor. If we recall Peirce's idea of translation as a continual growth of signs, what we may call reiteration, then we should imagine in every case a flux of translation. In this flux, an utterance as a singular event has no significance when severed from what this utterance is in response to—in Peirce's terms, the sign of which the present sign is an interpretant. That is, the meaning of "meaning" of any utterance cannot be severed from how the utterance is understood—how it is translated. In this, we return to our point that sameness is constituted through the performance of

difference. Primarily, our view is opposed to the conception of meaning as a self-same essence attached to, embodied in, or hovering over a word, sentence, or text.

With this correction to our earlier position, the question posed on intuitive grounds in section four can now be addressed. There we asked what might be the linguistic role of translation corresponding to the role of linguistic innovation exhibited by metaphor. In a way this question has been addressed all along, and partially answered in the previous section, but at this point we are in a position to formulate the answer more succinctly. *The role of translation is for meaning to bear itself across time, to sustain meaning in the flux of interpretation, and to rejuvenate language by saying the same in different ways.* In our terms, we can say that language directs man's performance as the play directs the performance of the actors. In translation, meaning is not brought from one place into another. Rather, to understand what is meant is to engage in a performance that culminates in application. Only with this performance can an indication be made of what is the same between the original and final utterance, despite the difference between the two.

From reading the above paragraph, one may suppose that sameness arises out of a kind of comparison between the original and the final utterance; then, those features that match constitute the sameness, while those features that differ constitute the difference. This would be a mistaken interpretation that we guarded against throughout the text. To think such a comparison possible supposes the possibility of somehow exiting the flux of translation, going outside it, as if the comparison were not itself just another translation.

> There is no absolute criterion for good translation; for such a criterion to be available, we have to be able to compare the source and target texts with a third text which would bear the identical meaning that is supposed to be passed from the first to the second. The same thing said on both sides. As was the case

> for the Plato of *Parmenides*, there is no third man between the
> idea of man and such-and-such a specific man … nor is there a
> third text between the source text and the target text
> (Ricoeur, 2004, 22).

In fact, each comparison is just another interpretation, another translation, another way of understanding an utterance, and another performance of sameness-in-difference. We can say that translations are always only judged with respect to each other and not with respect to any absolute meaning of the utterance itself (Ricoeur, 2004, 22). To say that some translation is false—inaccurate—in comparison with the original suggests that it does not match the original. But to perform this comparison is to have already translated. To say that some translation does not match the original means that one has identified that which must be matched in the original, but this act of identification is already translation. Results of translation are only compared with each other and not with the "meaning-in-itself" of the original.

§ 14. Concluding Remarks

From the beginning we set out to retrieve translation from the periphery of language and look at it in the context of the broader issues of meaning. To this end, it was essential to reformulate our discourse on translation. For one, our very own language (English) forces us to think of translation and meaning in certain ways that prevent full appreciation of the complexity of translation. These problems were solved by first reframing translation in terms of "saying the same thing in a different way," and later by proposing the fundamental model of performance of sameness-in-difference. Once this translation of translation was initiated, it became possible to see that translation lies at the heart of language. Translation constitutes one of its conditions because there must be different ways of saying the same thing. This is necessary for the distinction of signifier and signified, as well as sense and reference. Overall, we can conclude that translation is needed for the very concept of meaning to be meaningful.

With further inquiry, the alignment of translation with hermeneutics became apparent and inevitable. Saying the same thing in a different way is not some oddity or universal law, rather in looking at interpretation and the process of understanding, we ascertained that performance of sameness-in-difference underlies these processes. That is, rewording is an essential form of application, present in every case of linguistic understanding. In this light, we are inclined to conclude that language, as a medium of intersubjectivity and communication, must involve translation.

Our position has been that translation is a condition for meaningfulness. For this thesis to be convincing, however, it is not obligatory to define or capture what meaning is

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or how to identify and manipulate it in particular cases. While using this term "meaning" and generally having a sense for what we mean, when we inquire into its conditions and ways of operating we are not answering "what meaning is." Instead, we are interested in how meaning works. This implies building up a system of interrelated ideas, processes, and descriptions. Consequently, this explanatory net gives us more than rules of identification; it gives us ways of speaking.

Framing the issues of translation in terms of performance of sameness-in-difference opens us to seeing a certain interrelatedness of things. Our point of view becomes systematic. As a result, the meaning of "meaning" does not disclose its essential sense or inner nature, but provides a way of navigating within the system of concepts. It would be absurd to ask what meaning is, and then provide an answer in terms of differences and relations. Such an answer indicates that either the original question was abandoned in the process of inquiry, or it remains both unanswered and unimportant. To speak of essences in terms of differences is dubious at best. In general, approaching the questions of meaning through the portal of translation sows much needed apprehension about inquiring into "what" meaning is. If "meaning" in-itself possesses some absolute nature, which can or cannot be accessed, then we are forever stuck in the fruitless dilemma with respect to translation. Either perfect translation is possible and easily achieved, or it is impossible and translation itself is an illusion. Both terms of the dilemma fly in the face of actual everyday instances of translation. Therefore, we should satisfy ourselves with just speaking meaningfully about meaning. And it is this that the present work has aimed to achieve.

We can now speak of meaning as an ongoing performance. When understanding an

utterance, each person must perform this utterance in their own words or activities (which are both instances of application). Each person must translate. With every such performance—each instance of highlighting—the sameness is instantiated and significance established. Meaningfulness is an ongoing affair, with the last utterance conferring significance on its predecessors while awaiting its own translation. Yet, it would be naïve to trace out the changeless, self-same element within this flow of translation and tout this element as the actual meaning. Roughly, if we have three utterances, with the second being a translation of the first and the third being a translation of the second (translation of translation), then what has remained the same between the first and second utterance and first and third utterance need not itself be the same. All three utterances may converge on an idea, but this does not mean that this idea is simply the common denominator of the utterances. It is precisely their play of differences, their different ways of being different, that does the converging.

Granted, we can abstract a *noematic* realm of meanings—a pure language. As we have seen, the distinction between signifier and signified is not itself meaningless. However, it would be a mistake to suppose that this *noematic* realm is more or less real than the performative instances of sameness-in-difference. This act of abstraction is simply another performance of sameness-in-difference. It is precisely an act of lifting off the concepts from their concrete manifestation in different instances of the same. These concepts can then seem absolute precisely because they are so disembodied.

What we have also stressed throughout this study is the creative side of translation. Such creativity suggests an important path to rethinking the opposition between freedom and determinism; an idea that we can only gesture at here and not explore in any

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thorough way. Again and again it was said that the translator's work is not determined by the original, even though the original might beckon to be translated. At the same time, despite an indeterminate number of possible translations, the translator is not free to do as she pleases. The original determines a field of play on which an infinity of different games can be played. Instead of speaking about better or worse games, or better or worse translations, we may more fruitfully speak about more or less translatable translations. Which, if our analysis in sections ten and eleven is correct, means that translations can be more or less understandable. And this, in turn, must mean how successfully a translation (or an original for that matter) engenders an interpretant—the more said. A "bad" translation is like pressing the mute button forever.[22] If determinism should have any place in the theory of translation, then it is here. Determinism is cessation of performance.

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[22] If a bad, deterministic translation is one that halts performance, then what about some great translations that were badly received and took a long time to be recognized. The reply to this objection resides in the objection itself. Granted, recognition took some time, but it came—the translation engendered further performance after all. In fact, it can frequently happen that ground-shaking translations go through a gestation period. When this period is over, however, these translations (or originals) tend to become more fecund than all others. Imagine, for a moment, the opposite of this situation. Imagine a translation or original that never induces a performance of sameness-in-difference. Would it make sense to speak of a great translation or work in this case?

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