2. Epistemological positions

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Abstract

This chapter deals with the epistemology of Translation Studies and intersemiotic
translation. It does so from the perspective of the philosophy of science, reviewing the
main epistemological traditions in the field in relation to entailments of a general theory
of translation based on Peircean semiotics. Traditional, dichotomous and more recent
complexity-oriented epistemologies are discussed against this background. In the
second part of the chapter, epistemic pluralism is introduced as an approach that can
both enable and be enabled by a general semiotic theory of translation. In particular, the
discussion covers the implications for an empirical agenda based on epistemological
critical realism and the articulation of semiotic categories into models amenable to
empirical investigation.

Keywords: intersemiotic translation, epistemic pluralism, Translation Studies
epistemology, scientific realism, semiosis

1. Introduction

Epistemology is the field of philosophy that deals with knowledge. It analyses how

justified belief is attained, assessed, and the ways in which these knowledge and

certainty generation processes pertain to experience and reason[1]. As such, epistemology

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

is a central concern of philosophers of science, who inquire scientific methods and progress, and also for scholars within each discipline interested in investigating the constructs and methods around which knowledge and discourse are generated. Philosophers of science have approached these issues along with the ontological assumptions and commitments about reality and human understanding, traditionally focusing on the natural sciences and their description of the physical world (see Rosenberg & McIntyre 2020 for an updated overview on the philosophy of science).

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

2. Dichotomous epistemologies in Translation Studies

TS epistemology is traditionally considered to begin with Holmes's "The Name and Nature of Translation Studies" (1972), where the new discipline and its contents were literally mapped. However, translation had received the attention of writers, scholars and translators themselves for centuries, generating a body of reflections that did not engage with the methods and ideas of scientific inquiry, but definitely shaped Western notions of translation in ways that would still imbue TS constructions. An important, recurrent feature in these pre-TS discussions was the focus on interlingual translation of literary and religious texts, setting the preeminence of source texts and their authors and

the immutability of meaning. Reflections on translation often took the form of prescriptive accounts, prefaces, and commentaries pivoting on literality and fidelity that would reflect the ideas of the philosophical tradition prevalent at each time. The understanding of translation as a written phenomenon happening across/between absolutes (content/form, fidelity/treason, source language/target language) led to an influential dichotomous view that Blumczynski & Hassani trace back to Aristotelian views (2019). The disperse and diverse nature of schools of thought –in the absence of a translation school proper– and the establishment of dichotomies dominated the discussion of mainly interlingual written translation, which would end up marking TS epistemology: up to today, TS scholars have in a vast majority focused on binary constructions of interlingual communication and extensively draw from other fields, leading to diverging understandings of the object of study and generating epistemological clashes (the most conspicuous of which can be found in the debate hosted by Chesterman & Arrojo, 2000).

Despite these differences, the dichotomous distinction of absolutes and the focus on written linguistic communication remained constant and central. Until the second half of the 20th century translation was constructed either as a literary phenomenon or merely a linguistic one. Interestingly, but not surprisingly given the focus on linguistic texts, one of the main frameworks of reference for the study of literary translation was hermeneutics. Influenced by the philosophers of the German Romanticism and their ideas on language and nation (see Von Humboldt 1816, but also the works of Schlegel and Herder), Schleiermacher brought to bear a hermeneutic approach to translation, posing one of the most influential dichotomies in the study of translation when he introduced his two methods of translation (1813). These opposing methods and the romantic notion of language as a repository or vehicle for national or cultural elements would inspire Antoine Berman (1984) and Lawrence Venuti (1995) to develop what we might call dichotomous theories of literary translation.

From the perspective of Linguistics, dichotomous views reducing translation to a change in code or a merely transfer across linguistic systems were further reinforced by positivist models of language dominating the structural linguistic paradigm in TS, for instance, Vinay & Darbelnet (1958), Jakobson (1959) and Catford (1965). These scholars favored a focus on language as a system and translation as a phenomenon that could be studied by contrastive analysis between systems. While Jakobson introduced

intralinguistic and intersemiotic translation, he did so from a dichotomy-based understanding of signs, and the focus in TS would remain on interlingual translation. Within the linguistic, semiotic paradigm two main schools emerged during the second half of the 20th century, the Leipzig School and the Paris School, that accepted that communication across systems was possible by means of deverbalization (Seleskovitch 1978), or simply detaching *signifieds* from *signifiers*. Both Leipzig School and Paris School researchers initiated the empirical study of the processes of translation and interpreting, pioneering the observation of practitioners and trainees as a proxy to the mental processes involved (Kade 1964, Jäger 1977, Wotjak 2003). The linguistic paradigm evidences the dualism between content and form and spearheaded the observation of subjects in earnest, introducing a key element in the future epistemology of TS, empiricism.

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

The empirical, descriptive paradigm has not been uncontested. It poses the evident limitation of a positivist view of translation, assuming a stability of meaning and *real* phenomena that would lead to landscape where, according to Anthony Pym, "a rather quaint empiricism reigns, as in much of DTS, or in corpus linguistics, or think-aloud protocols, which rarely transcend positivist notions of science" (Pym, 2007, p. 38). In parallel to the development of Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS) following the work of Gideon Toury (1995/2012), some TS researchers working on literary translation or interested in cultural aspects of translation brought to bear poststructuralist and deconstructionist theories rooted in a relativistic tradition (Derrida 1985; Arrojo 1993). From an epistemological perspective, relativism entails that all

knowledge is unstable and therefore relative, that is, there is not such a thing as a real touchstone against which theories can be checked, let alone meaning, and so empiricism is not a valid way of gaining generalizable knowledge. The divide between descriptive and relativistic scholars persists despite their evolution over time and it has been one of the hot topics about the (dis)unity of TS as a discipline (Arrojo 2002 & Chesterman 2002). Postmodern epistemologies, of course, go far beyond the schematic simplification of deconstructionism here presented for the sake of argument. There are postmodern epistemic positions that are not necessarily relativistic, but that rightly problematize translation as a multifaceted and complex phenomenon that transcends dichotomies and is mediated by human, social, and economic variables (among others) that easily escape from the narrowing down that empirical research requires, making generalizations difficult. For example, from the perspective of historiography, scholars have pointed out that the wide-ranging generalizations of DTS explanatory frameworks do not accommodate the need for the specific in historical research in TS (Rundle 2012). From the perspective of didactics, Donald Kiraly developed a model of translation competence acquisition based on socioconstructivist and postmodern postulates that acknowledges the emergent nature of knowledge, cognition, and translation itself (2000, 2015). While still focusing on language-based communication, in its application to TS didactics, socioconstructivism breaks away with hard realism and absolute categories arranged in dichotomies. Translation knowledge (and, also, epistemic cognitive success) is constructed in each translation instance in a process of interaction with the environment and other people, who, together with the task requirements, constrain the meaning-making process of translation. We will see in next sections how these positions resonate with a semiotic theory of translation and its proposed epistemology.

Efforts to investigate the translation process initiated by scholars in the Leipzig and Paris schools had been continued over the following decades, favoring the models and methods of experimental psychology and cognitive sciences to the detriment of Linguistics. From an epistemological perspective this meant the adoption of a realist, empirical agenda based on first generation information-processing paradigm models (for a discussion see Muñoz & Marín forthcoming). Despite an explicit interest in the translation process, the models applied depicted cognition as a linear set of discrete stages that happened without any link to the environment. A period of extensive

borrowing ensued bringing from other disciplines methods and ideas that were simply applied to translation phenomena.

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

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

3. Complexity epistemologies in Translation Studies

Starting the second decade of the 21st century, a number of scholars in TS began to develop translation-specific theoretical frameworks that problematized and posed alternatives to dichotomous epistemologies. In Cognitive Translation Studies (CTS) Ricardo Muñoz (2010) proposed cognitive translatology as an alternative to models and theories of the translating mind rooted in the cognitivist postulates of the information processing paradigm (see Piccinini 2012 for a discussion of cognitivism in cognitive science). Drawing from situated cognition or 4ea cognition (embodied, extended, embedded, enacted and affective cognition) tenets, Muñoz (2010) proposes the first translation-specific cognitive paradigm. It assumes cognition to be an adaptive, bodily process leading to emergent mental constructions. Thus, cognitive translatology does away with the distinction body/mind and also with the divide mind/environment, since cognitive processes are assumed to be supported by the physical environment and the interaction with other actors in the process. The notion of interaction is critical here, as cognitive translatology proponents view cognition (and therefore the cognitive

underpinnings of translation and meaning-making) as a continuous engagement with the environment and with others, that is, constrained by the physical medium, including our own bodies (Muñoz 2016). The continuum is no longer a cline between two opposing ends, but a plait of interrelated variables that call for complex modelling (Spivey 2007).

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

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

Other voices pointed out the limitations of dialectal discourses in translation that minimized or simply swept complexity under the rug of absolute categories (Gentzler 2012). Among these voices, were calls to address epistemological issues in Translation Studies and align it with current developments in Western philosophy (Arduini & Nergaard; Marais 2014). Marais poses a framework for an epistemology of complexity that is eminently relational, focusing on the links and engagement of elements rather than making distinctions between parts and whole or opposing binaries (2014, p. 20). The complexity theory advocated by Marais is a reaction against the long-standing reductionism of the sciences, prone to isolate the object of study in favor of controlled conditions that disregard the varying, movable nature of reality –both as experienced and as constructed– that doesn't impose radical rationalizations:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

a) A processual construction of the phenomena under study that fits semiotic views on meaning, and

b) the fact that they are translation-specific and do not squeeze phenomena into other disciplines' theoretical apparati, which provides frameworks to develop a translation-semiosis theory catering for the specifics of translation phenomena.

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

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

> (…) that its existence is relative to other things. In particular, meaning is never monadic. It emerges through complex interrelationships and through relationships between relationships. Thus, the meaning of any part of the semiotic process, i.e. a particular representamen, cannot be separated or conceived of apart from the whole of the semiotic process. (2019, p. 131)

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

Stecconi's discussion on the triadicity of T-semiosis where the foundation (the vague qualities that make translation translation) is a first in relationship with translation events (2nd) and concepts of translation (3rd) (Stecconi, 2004, p. 483).

The relational nature of meaning is also the nature of knowledge. Marais (2019) discusses the epistemology of John Deely's *semiotic realism* (2007) as an epistemic theory describing the relational, emergent nature of knowledge construction of which both reality and ideas partake (cf. Latour 2007). Marais stresses the relevance of Deely's epistemology as based on semiotic translation processes of meaning-making and its convenience to avoid the blind alley of solipsistic idealism/constructivism (2019, p. 153). Deely's work and Marais's application to translation epistemology are indeed a lucid description of knowledge construction. However, that relational categories remain fuzzy and empirical research into translation processes would require neater, operationalized categories and a firmer form of realism that rightly problematizes positivist positions, but that allows for the construction (for the abstraction) of clearly delimited phenomena as objects of study. In order words, and in terms of Stecconi's take on Peirce's phenomenology (2004): if semiotic realism is a valid and suggestive theory of knowledge construction at the foundational level, there is no reason why we should not avail ourselves of well-delineated models that lend themselves to empirical observation at the event or concept levels provided the data gathered are stable and meaningful to the vaguer or more underdetermined categories (Horst 2016). I would like to contend that a critical realism position would fit this purpose for an epistemology of Translation Studies as a link between fuzzy categories and empirical concepts, and that such an epistemology could be combined with semiotic realism from a pluralist stance.

One of the more suggestive traits of both complexity epistemologies and a semiotic theory of translation is that they lend themselves to a plurality of epistemic approaches to explore different facets of translation. This is relevant for intersemiotic theories of translation that provide a baseline explanation of translation as a semiotic process in iterations between first, second and third instances, but that provide for ample space to qualify those processes according to which the concrete semiotic system, communicative event or actual interpretant, representamen and object are. It is a simple set of fuzzy categories. In this sense, complexity epistemologies and intersemiotic theories dovetail in catering for the multiplicity of variables producing, enabling and

constraining translation and, at the same time, offering an all-encompassing explanatory framework, that is, semiosis. It might be contended that such an approach would veer into monism, one explanatory framework to rule them all. However, a(n inter)semiotic theory of translation is just a proxy to explain a myriad of constraints at such a basic level that saying translation is a semiotic process, without further elaboration, might end up being banal without ever being wrong. Therefore, further models, possibly pertaining in different traditions, might be necessary. Overly complex models and theories paradoxically fail to describe accurately phenomenal complexity (as shown by Pym 2003); whereas models, theories or basic constructs that are simple and flexible categories better account for complex processes involving many variables. This is not only a matter of parsimony or economy of means; it is a theoretical design that avoids internal inconsistencies at a given level while allowing enrichment of the object of study at other levels. Having a set of broad categories that pertain to the very essentials of a phenomenon while acknowledging, even if implicitly, the complexity of a said phenomenon as an object of study allows for the *ad hoc* modelling of all the other aspects or variables of that object at several levels and, at the same time, would let us accommodate them in the wide-ranging, more general account. Such an approach would lead us to epistemic scientific pluralism.

4. Scientific Pluralism and intersemiotic translation

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

even though it depends on a plurality of makers" (Zangwill, 2020, p. 497). Thus, a pluralist approach would not contravene the relational nature of knowledge. It relates to the ways and methods through which we gain knowledge, in this case, scholarly methods.

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

Radical pluralism might seem at odds with the firmer, critical realism I have advocated before. Several possible ways of knowledge, that are constructed differently, might defeat the purpose of inquiring *one* reality. However, epistemic pluralism does not necessarily entail ontological pluralism. Dupré (1993) argues for the compatibility of pluralism with a realist stance as many methods can converge –and even cohere– on a "real" discovery. Also, from a pragmatist angle, "various successes of science will easily lead us to the knowledge of various realities (or various versions or aspects of Reality)" (Chang, 2018:185). A relational ontology might as well be an aim for a variety of approaches across levels of investigation or focusing on different aspects of the semiotic process. Ludwig (2015, p. 15) considers the ontological question to be an empirical one and doubts that everything can be reduced to a "fundamental physical ontology." Maul et al. (2016, p. 318) on their part discuss diverging commitments about the world (metaphysical), their properties about truth (semantic) and their interpretation (epistemological) that inform varying types of realism. These differences relate to notions of "style of scientific reasoning" (Hacking) that permeate object descriptions as theory-laden. That is, what is considered to be true at the ontology level depends on the system of knowledge, its style and commitments and, importantly, on the constraints of the environment—it is a semiotic process itself.

Pluralism offers the possibility to integrate different traditions and styles to tackle complexity when no single approach would suffice (Longino 2002; Mitchell, 2013) and, what is more important, it enriches our description of our objects of study by adding different layers that can correspond to the different levels of analysis (Ruphy 2017; Barberis et al., 2017). Again, these proposals do not naively accept positivist realism, but provide for multiplicity of constructed realities as modelled. By the same token that, according to Marais (2014), what makes the object of study belong in a discipline is not the phenomenon, but the approach to it, its abstraction into a research object. Thus, different scientific styles impose different criteria for the investigation of the phenomena: "a style is not valued because it would allow us to discover some truths; rather, a style is what defines the kinds of propositions that can be a candidate for being true or false" (Ruphy 2011, p. 1214). Styles, therefore, introduce their own research objects with their own ontological commitments, which triggers an ontological debate (Hacking 1992/2002). These debates are connatural to scientific enterprises and are at the core of its success, leading to deliberation and consensus-reaching engagement

within scholarly communities (Latour 2007). I would like to contend that monist approaches to scientific research tend to obliterate these debates and shrug away complexity by not acknowledging it. On the contrary, pluralism focuses on these debates. A general, semiotic theory of meaning and therefore of translation would allow for the endorsement of scientific pluralism by providing a foundational benchmark, vague or fuzzy its categories if we like, on which different, more concrete models can be developed. When discussing Peircean categories (representamen, interpretant and object) in application to translation, Marais points out that:

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

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

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

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

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

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

We can be posed with two questions at this point:

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

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

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

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

This kind of methodological pluralism might still be compatible with ontological or metaphysical monism—all the different methodologies leading to one and only reality. However, Chang pursues his argument further, advocating for a pragmatic metaphysical pluralism that accepts an alternative construction of "truth" based on what he calls a "coherence theory of truth". Coherence is here understood as the relation between

epistemic activities conducive to success (cf. Haack's "conduct of enquiry") whereby we assign truth value or deem *real* the object of a representamen (a theory in this case) in a given context. In Chang's example, the atomic weight of an element which is real in chemistry but not in nuclear physics (2018, p. 182); in a translation example: the stability of the meaning of the Spanish word *mesa* as the suitable translation for *table*. In other words, it is a way to fit reality into pluralism, acknowledging the constructed nature of reality as an object of scientific inquiry. It is also consistent with semiotic theories as it is a relational ontology in the way of Deely's semiotic realism, since our empirical understanding of reality, as much as meaning, emerges in interaction:

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

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

Marín (2021) offers a pluralistic approach to translation theory development by distinguishing between epistemic levels: theories and models. Theories are to be considered general, internally consistent descriptions of real phenomena abstracted into objects of study, while models are to be considered concrete, idealized representations of the object of study that can be tested empirically. Models are interpretative (Bailer-Jones, 2009) and therefore may favor some aspects of the phenomenon to the detriment of others. For instance, a model of translation as a negentropic semiotic work (Marais 2019) might include environmental and physiological constraints as an integral part. These two epistemic levels respond to different coherence requirements: while theories are to be internally coherent and consistent with other theories in their research tradition, models do not need to cohere, provided they provide empirical access to the phenomenon under study (Horst 2016; Marín 2021, p. 228). As such, models do not claim any ontological reality, they are functional entities (Giere 2008; Veit 2020) that serve as "intermediaries" (Morgan & Morrison, 1999) between the phenomena and the

theory. This kind of model pluralism allows empirical data from different aspects of the object of study into only general theory. For instance, effort models in CTIS can be used to feed the description of the interpretant in semiotic theory of translation or the socio-cognitive constraints of meaning-making in intersemiotic translation can be modelled according to Kotze's view of translation as a phenomenon constrained by socio-cognitive dimensions, which can then be adopted as analysis variables (2020).

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

5- Concluding remarks

Based on the discussion above, combining an intersemiotic theory of translation and scientific pluralism as an epistemological agenda bears the promise of advancing theoretical development in Translation and Interpreting Studies and, at the same time, enhancing its object of study, transcending dichotomous views of mediation. The benefits of such an approach can be summarized as follows:

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

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