

# Translation, Identity and Identification: Thoughts on the Function of Selective Translation(s) of Language and Symbols in Distinctive Cultural Systems

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The main goal of this paper is to show how the way German culture shaped itself through translation of foreign cultural elements can be seen as a paradigm for identity forming in general when one considers the aspects of imitation and re-accentuation of foreign cultural elements as a vital factor in inter-cultural communication in which translation of one system's language into the language of another one plays an important role in the interactive process of understanding each other but, at the same time, being able to draw a distinction between one's own cultural system and the foreign one(s). Taking the examples of Johann Gottlieb Fichte's plan to establish a German cultural system based on a shared German language, this paper will go on to examine translation processes, such as Schleiermacher's translation of Plato into German and Heidegger's translation of Plato into Heideggerian terminology in order to show certain mechanisms in translation that introduce foreign cultural elements into a cultural system by altering them linguistically. Johann Fischart's Rabelais translation will be looked at to show how a French text is turned into a uniquely self-referential German text that changes everything French into German cultural symbols to radically move away from the foreign original. Surprisingly the introduction of foreign elements into a cultural system increases the likelihood to establish a cultural identity by increasing the self-referentiality and reflexivity of the cultural system through increasing the number of cultural symbols that the system can refer to. Moreover, this self-referentiality is beneficial to the stability of the system.

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## Introduction

One of the most decisive characteristic of cultures as basis of a country is the fact that one culture ends where the common national language ends. France shares a border with Germany, but French and German are easily recognizable as different languages that are closely connected with the culture and cultural customs of the two different cultures of France and Germany. German culture ends where the German language ends. Among the earliest thinkers that based the formation of identity and cultural recognition on language Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1764-1816) might be the most noteworthy and certainly most programmatic agitator for language—the German language—as basis of a unique (German) cultural system. Language was to serve as

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common denominator of the German cultural system Fichte hoped to be able to establish in strict opposition to the French one.

The problem with language and culture is that it is often hard to exactly determine which parts belong exclusively to the cultural system a particular language is used in. Many cultures include foreign cultural elements that became part of their cultural system by translation from foreign languages. These translations of foreign terms or motifs can happen involuntarily or on purpose when a thinker or writer considers a certain aspects—or aspects—of a foreign cultural system valuable for his/her own cultural system and uses translation as a method to include elements he/she finds particularly worthy into his/her cultural system via translation into his/her cultural system's language. When such a method is used in order to create a certain kind of one's own culture's identity the question arises what aspects of foreign cultural systems have been used to create a particularly German identity in the German cultural system beginning from the early 16th century to the 21st century by translating foreign culture(s) into German culture. The example of Fichte has been mentioned above. It is the aim of this proposed research project to shed light on the way German cultural identity has been shaped by translating foreign cultural elements into particularly German ones via translations of foreign literature and canonized texts into German in order to shape German identity and, furthermore, to be able to interconnect German thought, culture, and literature to the mainstream of intellectual discourse in the Western hemisphere starting from Greek antiquity to American literature in the 20th century.

The main goal of this project is to show how the way German culture shaped itself through translation of foreign cultural elements can be seen as a paradigm for identity forming in general when one considers the aspects of imitation and re-accentuation of foreign cultural elements as a vital factor in inter-cultural communication in which translation of one system's language into the language of another one plays an important role in the interactive process of understanding each other but, at the same time, being able to draw a distinction between one's own cultural system and the foreign one(s). Thus, the question that arises is: How can cultural identity be created through translation—translation of language and translation of cultural symbols and customs?

The theoretical part of the analysis will make use of Niklas Luhmann's writing on systems, since my approach starts with Fichte's programmatic agenda to shape the borders of German culture according to those geographic regions where a certain kind of German is spoken, therefore reshaping the map of Germany at the same time in order to achieve a unified German cultural system. Luhmann (1987) defined the borders of a system as *Sinn Grenzen*—borders of meaning: "Die Besonderheit sozialer Systeme besteht darin, daß diese sich in der Form von Sinn an Komplexität orientieren ... Das bedeutet, daß die Differenz von Umwelt und System ausschließlich durch *Sinn Grenzen* vermittelt wird" (p. 265). The author wants to focus on these borders as *Sprach Grenzen*—borders of language—that can be crossed through translation of language and meaning. According to Luhmann (2013), translation as identity formation method is situated in between language itself and the imposing of power: "Im übrigen aber ist das Sprechen von Sprache ein Problem der Selektion aus einem vorselektierten Bereich von Ausdrucksmöglichkeiten, die Anwendung von Macht dagegen ein Problem der Übertragung von Selektion" (p. 88). The aspect of translation as method to incorporate desired foreign elements into German culture will employ Bakhtin's theory of re-accentuation in literary translations rather than Walter Benjamin's more or less esoteric concept of translation and aura. Luhmann's and Bakhtin's sociological and linguistic (literary) concepts will provide the theoretical frame for the analysis. By combining their theoretical approaches, it will be possible to show to what extend the sociological function of translation

very often shows strong programmatical motivations. Examples of the mechanisms at work in cultural translation will be taken from the Rabelais translation of Johann Fischart, Luther's Bible translation, Schleiermacher's Plato in comparison to Heidegger's translation of the original (or better: romanticized) Plato into a Heideggerian Plato by doing so interconnecting Plato's thought with Heidegger's philosophical discourse, Grimm's fairy tales as example of how foreign folktales became German stories, and Arno Schmidt's translation of James Fenimore Cooper's Littlepage novels into Schmidt's German prose as a way of linking himself to the admired American writer. By using all these different translation scenarios, the author wants to put everything into a pattern that allows to highlight certain mechanisms that are characteristic of most situations where cultural translations are at work.

### **Language as System—as Framework for the Establishment of Identity**

The borders of a certain system with a specific identity can be the area where the native speakers a certain standardized language meet speakers of another—unfamiliar and therefore “systemfremden”—language. The difference in the languages defines the end of the system creating identity through the shared language. Language itself therefore provides the opportunity to create a particular identity in a system with clearly denied borders. Standardized languages can be defined the following way: “Standardsprachen sind ... Systeme, denen die Gesellschaft eine eigene Identität zuschreibt” (Giesecke, 2006, p. 150). Naturally, the standard of this particular system's language has to be defined first. Then, the borders can be defined—in the scenario proposed, here it would be the borders of a standardized language.<sup>1</sup> Nobody knew realized the opportunities arising from this standardized communicative code more remarkably than Johann Gottfried Fichte, who wrote:

Was es zur Zeit von Fichtes Ansprache tatsächlich gibt, sind viele deprimierte, bukolische und banale Länder und Ländchen, den nicht ganz so harmlosen, nicht ganz so banalen preußischen Komplex einmal ausgenommen—Länder also, die in ihrer Summe allenfalls eine körperliche Vorskizze zu einer späteren nationalstaatlichen Struktur ergeben. (Sloterdijk, 1998, pp. 31-32)

Fichte's goal was to eliminate the differences between all “Germans” and to create a shared identity: “Ich rede für Deutsche schlechtweg, von Deutschen schlechtweg, nicht anerkennend, sondern durchaus beiseite setzend und wegwerfend alle die trennenden Unterscheidungen, welche unselige Ereignisse seit Jahrhunderten in der einen Nation gemacht haben” (Fichte, 1978, p. 13).

There needs to be a standardized code that enables all of the speakers to be able to identify with in order to create a shared identity and, ultimately, the notion of the “we”. Michael Tomasello (2014) explained the uniquely human ability to unite under a shared “we” intentionality:

In general, humans are able to coordinate with others, in a way that other primates seemingly are not, to form a “we” that acts as a kind of plural agent to create everything from a collaborative hunting party to a cultural institution. (p. 3)

Fichte intended to create a specifically “German” “we” based on the German language. This “German” identity had, of course, to be communicated: “If the systems are to function, then the newly created facts must be

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<sup>1</sup> John Searle gives a vivid example that may illustrate the image of language as barrier. In the case of Searle it is a line of stones that separates two different territories: “... if we suppose that the members of the tribe recognize that the line of stone creates rights and obligations, that they are *forbidden* to cross the line, that they are *not supposed to* cross it, then we have symbolization. The stones now symbolize something beyond themselves; they function like words” (Searle, 1995, p. 71). In the here discussed scenario of language serving as system border, it is the words that symbolize the barrier that, when crossed, leads into another (foreign) system with a different standardized language and identity.

communicated from one person to another ... Even in simple cases of institutional facts, this communicability requires a means of public communication, a language” (Searle, 1995, p. 77). Jürgen Habermas (1995) stated that a general agreement is a necessary requirement of any successful act of communicative interaction in a system: “Der Begriff des kommunikativen Handelns setzt Sprache als Medium einer Art von Verständigungsprozessen voraus, in deren Verlauf die Teilnehmer, indem sie sich auf eine Welt beziehen, gegenseitig Geltungsansprüche erheben, die akzeptiert und bestritten werden können” (p. 148).

Fichte saw the German language as standard and common denominator for German culture. The borders of the area in which the German language was spoken therefore automatically set the borders of the realm of German culture and, ultimately: German identity. The German language, quite logically, was seen by Fichte as basis of the specifically German culture the philosopher wanted to establish. The problem was that certain (desired) cultural elements had to be imported into German culture in order to enrich German culture and make it able to compete with the established high cultures of Western countries, such as France and Great Britain.

### **Translation as Method to Establish Culture through Inclusion of Culturally Desirable Foreign Elements**

Translation of foreign texts into a language are a convenient way to include foreign cultural elements into the framework of another identity system by making them fit right in the linguistic code—therefore taking away the obvious foreign origin of these texts through Angleichung. This means that a translator (or author) translates an original text from another language into his own with the aim to include the admired foreign text into his own cultural reference system. This method is very common especially when it comes to the thought and mentality of highly civilized foreign cultures. In Western cultural and philosophical discourse, the most admired cultural reference system is the one of ancient Greece and here especially the works of Plato and Aristotle: “The Greeks ... represented a paradigm of the expressivist perfection. This is what helps to explain the immense enthusiasm for ancient Greece which reigned in Germany in the generation which followed Winckelmann” (Taylor, 1977, p. 34). In the late 18th and early 19th century, ancient Greek culture became an ideal for many German thinkers. Philosophers, like Herder, Schlegel, and Schleiermacher, turned to establish a German cultural system that could rival the civilization level of ancient Greek. The problem was that they need a cultural reference outside of German culture, since German culture had yet to be invented. In order to link the aspired German culture to the lineage of Greek thought, Schleiermacher and Schlegel planned to translate Plato’s complete writings into German. The main idea was to interconnect German thought directly with Greek thought: “1798 äußerte Schlegel in den philosophischen Unterhaltungen mit Schleiermacher (so erinnert sich dieser) den Gedanken, ‘daß es notwendig wäre, in dem dermaligen Zustand der Philosophie den Platon recht geltend zu machen, und ihn deshalb vollständig zu übersetzen’” (Jantzen, 2008, p. 30).

The result was Schleiermacher’s famous Plato translation in which the German Plato (2003) was presented to German readers. Schleiermacher claimed that Greek was the “original” language—the primeval language:

Die Übersetzung gibt in ihrem Tonfall und in ihren syntaktischen Strukturen das Griechische, die, “Ursprache” (wie Schleiermacher gern sagt) deutsch wieder; sie geht—wenn man so will—so weit wie möglich im Deutschen auf den griechischen Text ein, verwandelt sich ihm an. (p. 43)

The German translation links modern German to this primeval—most ancient language—thus making it an “original” language of old Greek proportions. Schleiermacher’s and Schlegel’s plan was to locate German

culture in ancient Greek culture—thereby showing that high degree of civilization of German culture and—at the same time—presenting German culture as equally original and primeval as the highly evolved civilization of ancient Greece. Naturally, Schleiermacher also intended to show that Germany was nothing less than the legitimate heir and successor of the Greek tradition. Schleiermacher's approach is a vivid example of Bakhtin's category of re-accentuation:

Within certain limits the process of re-accentuation is unavoidable, legitimate and even productive. But these limits may easily be crossed when a work is distant from us and when we begin to perceive it against a background completely foreign to it. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 420)

Bakhtin (1981) warned against oversimplifications:

Perceived in such a way, it may be subjected to a re-accentuation that radically distorts it. ... Especially dangerous is any vulgarizing that oversimplifies re-accentuation ... and that turns a two-voiced image into one that is flat, single-voiced—into a silted heroic image... (p. 420)

The fact that the Neo-Hellenists, like Schleiermacher and Xchlegel, focused on certain details of Greek culture and, therefore, showed a highly selective translation of Greek elements can be explained with Bakhtin's theory: Bakhtin (1986) explained the problem of a complete translation of a semantic system:

Any sign system (i.e., any language), regardless of how small the collective that produces its conventions may be, can always in principle be deciphered, that is, translated into other sign systems (other languages). Consequently, sign systems have a common logic, a potential single language of languages (which, of course, can never become a single concrete language, one of the languages). But the text (as distinct from languages as a system of means) can never be completely translated, for there is no potential single text of texts. (p. 106)

The problem now is, of course, how these translated elements can be effectively introduced into the new cultural environment. Luhmann (2013) consequently asked

wie denn bei steigender Komplexität der Verhältnisse eine getroffene Selektion noch wirksam übertragen werden kann, so daß sie relativ unabhängig von individuellen Motivationsstrukturen und sachlichen Sinnalternativen über längere Dauer erhalten bleibt. Die gemeinsame Orientierung an generalisiertem Einfluß erklärt nicht genug; ist es doch gerade die Frage, wie dieses Potential Kommunikation werden und in die Wirklichkeit übersetzt werden kann. (p. 89)

The one possible answer is that, through the translation process, these foreign cultural elements are not recognizable as foreign elements anymore but fit in their new cultural environment perfectly. This naturally means that the system has to be able to accept these new elements. Schleiermacher's goal was the inclusion of foreign cultural elements into the German cultural system in order to enrich slowly evolving German identity with an idealized thought system regarded as one of the most unique cultural systems with its very own identity. The aim is to make German culture just as recognizable and easily identifiable as "German" as the ancient Greek one. Ironically, the German idealists turned to foreign cultural elements to establish their intended German identity by selective translations of elements that were thought to be of cultural value for the newly invented German identity, which through these selective inclusions proves to be a cultural syncretism—a carefully constructed fabric of various elements of different cultures.

The above mentioned category of enrichment of a cultural system (in this case presented as an enrichment of a certain national language through translations of foreign language texts) also has its reversal: By not translating foreign words into a foreign language these obviously foreign words will always stand out in another textual environment and are easily identifiable as not part of the linguistic system of a certain national language.

The German language has greatly benefited from literary translations. Widely known examples include the translation of Shakespeare's works into German by Schlegel and Tieck that enriched the German language through commonly used phrases, such as "Abwarten und Teetrinken" (originally: "Wait and see"). A phrase like that can easily be included in everyday language, and few people will question whether it has a foreign cultural origin. Another example is Martin Luther's translation of the Bible. Luther intended a translation of biblical language into popular language (Dem Volk aufs Maul schauen), so that all Germans were able to read his translation. Luther's translations from Greek and Hebrew resulted in new German vocabulary, such as Feuertaufe, Bluthund, Selbstverleugnung, Machtwort, Schandfleck, Lückenbüßer, Gewissensbisse, Lästermaul and Lockvogel, and also brought new idiomatic phrases, like "Perlen vor die Säue werfen", "ein Buch mit sieben Siegeln", "die Zähne zusammenbeißen", etwas "ausposaunen", "im Dunkeln tappen", "ein Herz und eine Seele", "auf Sand bauen", "Wolf im Schafspelz", and "der große Unbekannte". Most of these terms represent a substantial part of modern German. Few people would ever doubt whether they are of non-German origin. But these words and phrases are the product of literary translation.

Another interesting function of literary translation is the translation of a famous text from another culture (and in another language) in order to include this text into the translator's own culture while, at the same time, using that foreign culture's text to draw a sharp distinction between the foreign culture and the culture of the translator. The translator's task is to make the foreign text completely blend in his/her own cultural code. The original text and the traces of the foreign culture literally dissolve in the translation, and it looks as if the text is a part (and a product) of the translator's language and culture. One famous example of such a translation is Johann Fischart's translation of Francois Rabelais' grotesque Renaissance novel *Gargantua*. The original uses a system of motifs that makes the novel clearly identifiable as French. Fischart's translation turns this French text into a uniquely German text by using colloquial German phrases and popular German language to erase any traces of French. Fischart goes even further and turns the translation against the French original by ridiculing the French. In Fischart's translation from 1575, the title *Gargantua* is changed to Affentheurlich Naupengeheurliche Geschichtsklitterung. The original introduction reads as follows:

Amis lecteurs, qui ce livre lisez,  
 Despouillez-vous de toute affection;  
 Et, le lisans, ne vous scandalisez:  
 Il ne contient mal ny infection.  
 Vray est qu'icy peu de perfection  
 Vous apprendrez, sinon en cas de rire.  
 Autre argument ne peut mon coeur éfire,  
 Voynat le dueil qui vous mine et consomme:  
 Mieulx est de ris que de larmes escrire,  
 Pource que rire est le propre de l'homme. (Rabelais, 1879, p. 5)

Here is Fischart's (1997, pp. 59-61) grotesquely extended version of Rabelais' introduction:

Ihr meine Schlampampische gute Schlucker, kurzweilige Stall und Tafelbrüder: ihr Schlaftrunkene wolbesoffene Kautzen und Schnautzhän, ihr Landkündige und Landschlindige Wein Verderber unnd Banckbuben: Ihr Schnargarkische Angsterträher, Kutterufstorcken, Birpausen, und meine Zeckvollzeppfge Domini Winholdi von Holwin: Ertzvilfraß lappscheisige Scheißhaußfüller unnd Abteckerische Zäpfleinlüller: Freßschnaufige Maulprocker, Collatzbäuch, Gargurgulianer: Grosprockschlindige Zipfler und Schmärrotzer: O ihr Latzdeckige Bäuch, die mit eim Kind essen, das ein Rotzige Nasen hat: ja den Löffel wider holt, den man euch hinder die thür würfft: Ja auch ihr Fußgrammige

Kruckenstupfer, Stäbelherrn, Pfatengramische Kapaunen, händgratler, Badenwalfarter: Huderer, Gutschirer, Jarneßbesucher, ihr Gargantzunige Geiermundler und Gurgelmänner, Butterbrater, safransucher, Meß und Marckbesucher, Hochzeitschiffer, Auuhaspler, Gutverlämmerer, Vatterverderber, Schleitzer, Schultrabeiser: Und du mein Gartengesellschaft vom Rollwagen, vom Marckschiff, von den Spigeleulen, mit euren sauberen Erndfreien Herbstsprüchen. Ihr Sontagsjünherlin mit dem feyertäglichen angesicht, ihr Bursch und Marckstanten, Pflastertretter, Neuzeytungspäher, Zeitungsverwetter, Naupentückische Nasen und Affenträher, Rauchverkeuffer, Geuchstecher, Blindmeuß und Hütlinpler, Lichtscheue Augennebeler: Und ihr feine Verzuckerte Gallen und Pillulen, unnd Honiggebeitzte Spinnen. Sihe da, ihr feine Schnuddelbutzen. Ihr Lungkitzlige Backenhalter unnd Wackenader, ihr Entenschnaderige, Langzüngige Krummschnäbel, Schwappelschwäble, die eym eyn Nuß vom Baum schwetzen: ihr Zuckerpapagoi, Hetzenamseler, Hetzenschwetzer, Starnstörer, Scherenschleiffer, Rohfincken, Kunkelstübische Gänsprediger, chärstübner, Judasjagige, Retscher, Waffelarten, Babeler und Babelarten, Fabelarten und Fabeler, von der Babilonischen Bauleut eynigkeyt. Ihr Hildenbrandsstreichige wilde Hummeln, Näumaufreisser, Trotteuffelsluckstellige Stichdenteuffel unnd Poppenschiser, die dem Teuffel ein horn außrauffen, unnd pulferhörlein drauß schrauffen. Unnd endlich du mein Gassentretendes Bulerbürstlein, das hin und wider umschilet, und nach dem Holtz stincket, auch sonst nichts bessers thut, dann rote Nasen trincket, und an der Geysen elenbogen hincket. Ja kurtzumb du Gäuchhorniges unnd weichzornigs Haußvergessen Mann unnd Weibsvolck, sampt allem anderen dürstigen Gesindleinb, denen der roh gefressen Narr noch auffstoset.

Ihr all, sag ich noch einmal, verstaht mich wol, solt sampt und sonders hie sein meine liebe Schulerkindlein, euch will ich zuschreiben diß mein fündlein, pfündlein und Pfründlein, euer sey diß Büchlein gar mit haut und haaar, weil ich doch euer bin so par, Euch ist der Schilt außgehenckt, kehrt hie ein, hie würd gut Wein geschenckt: was lasset ihr lang den Hipenbuben vergebens schreien? Ich kann euch das Hirn erstäubern, Geraten ihr mir zu Zuhörern, so wird gewiß dort die Weißheit auff der Wegscheid umbsonst rufen.

What becomes obvious in Fischart's translation is not only the extreme extension of the original introductory paragraph but foremost the decisively German motifs that are added in order to relocate the prose in the realm of German culture and language. Fischart even uses a specifically German reference system by including allusions to widely known German comical texts. With "Spigeleulen", Fischart alludes to the extremely popular medieval German Schwankroman *Till Eulenspiegel* (Dil Ulenspiegel)—a series of tales about a trickster fooling people through deliberately misinterpreting simple commands by taking them literally. The allusion to "Holtz" in the phrase "nach dem Holtz stincket" is a reference to the so-called "Franzosenholtz"—a kind of medicine used to cure sexually transmitted diseases or a direct allusion to the penis. Obviously, Fischart links the motif of the French to ridiculous imagery in order to debase everything French and put French culture in opposition to German culture. Another interesting aspect of Fischart's translation is the German he uses. Words, like "Zuckerpapagoi", "Babeler", and "Knuckelstübische", are representations of the local German dialect of Mainz. Fischart just spelled out the local pronunciation instead of using the standard High German one. Thereby his Rabelais speaks through the popular language of the people of Mainz—Fischart's hometown—and makes the text a true piece of popular (folk) literature of one specific German region, and not one of the standardized German language every speaker of German could relate to.

Fischart translates the original *Gargantua* into the local German dialect spoken in the Mainz area. But he changes not only the language. The whole French motif system is drastically changed into a series of motifs the people of the Mainz area can relate to and identify with. The close proximity of this region to French might explain Fischart's choice of strictly separating French and German culture. Where the cultures of France and Germany meet the translator-author draws a clear distinction in order to prevent any possible mix-up of the two languages and cultural systems. Fischart gives the original French text a whole new German identity in his translation and separates it from its original cultural environment and all details and motifs that could clearly

locate it in the French tradition. His translation thus is a radical rewriting of the text and, moreover, an extension and exaggeration of the original that, in its prose written in the popular dialect of Mainz, makes it seem a genuine product of southwestern popular culture.

### **Non-translation as Method of Exclusion of Foreign Cultural Particles**

There is of course the possibility to go the opposite way of Luther and Fischart by not translating foreign language terms into another language. Leaving foreign words the way makes them identifiable as foreign linguistic elements in a textual environment consisting of a homogenous cultural language. These foreign words are foreign particles that stick out and do not fit in with the rest of the text. Especially in the German scholastic tradition, terms of foreign languages are usually not translated into German, so that they stay recognizable as foreign words in the German text surrounding them. Theodor W. Adorno (1998) commented on this fact:

In Deutschland dagegen, wo die lateinisch-zivilisatorischen Bestandteile nicht mit der älteren Volkssprache verschmolzen, sondern durch Gelehrtenbildung und höfische Sitte eher von jener abgegrenzt wurden, stechen die Fremdwörter unassimiliert heraus und bieten dem Schriftsteller, der sie mit Bedacht wählt, so sich dar, wie Benjamin es beschrieb, als er von der silbernen Rippe eines Fremdworts sprach, das der Autor in den Sprachleib einsetzt. (p. 219)

By leaving the foreign words unchanged—that means, by not including them in the German language—they cannot become a part of the German cultural system and will always remain outside particles. Therefore, they cannot enrich the German language or culture because they will always be different. This also means that it will not be possible for the average people to relate to these foreign words they do not know because this specifically foreign terminology is part of a particular system that exists within the cultural system: the system of the sciences and scientific discourse. This fact automatically leads to the circumstance that this system within the system also clearly defines its borders through language—in this case: foreign language only used in the system of the sciences which is not accessible to the common people who are part of the cultural system but not part of the scientific discourse system.

The opposite situation of words not translated in order to leave them excluded from a certain system, so that the different systems have certain indicators by which they can be distinguished from each other is the supposed untranslatability of particular terms. Especially the German idealists claimed that certain “urdeutsche” words, such as Geist, Seele, and Volk cannot be translated because they represent a direct expression of German culture—German culture is claimed to speak through these terms. Therefore, they would lose their meaning in translation due to the separation from the German language which in itself is the voice of German culture. A vivid example of the way German Geist could not be separated from German culture—and therefore not meaningfully translated into other languages—is the following paragraph:

In the eighteenth century Johann Gottfried Herder imagined a German Nationalgeist and collected various songs that would become part of a tradition allegedly indicative of German cultural expression. During the age of Napoleon, when French soldiers overran Germany, Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm pieced together a collection of tales that later became common reading material for the majority of Germans and thus part of a shared national experience. (Roberts, 2010, p. 202)

In Hegel’s concept, the Geist has a strictly cultural meaning. The German Geist can only express itself in the German language which, ultimately, provides the basis of the German cultural system. Thus, the German Geist as uniquely German cultural concept and code is untranslatable. Ironically, English and French translation



usually go along with this claim and mostly leave German words, such as *Zeitgeist*, *Weltanschauung*, *Unmittelbarkeit* untranslated. But maybe this is not due to the untranslatability of these terms but rather because the same mechanisms of exclusion are at work here that were discussed above when pointing out why the German science system tends to leave scholastic terms untranslated in order to be able to distinguish itself from the popular linguistic code of the German cultural system.<sup>2</sup>

### **Translation as Identification: Plato's *Lehre von der Wahrheit*? Martin Heidegger's Translation of Plato's *Höhlengleichnis***

Translation can not only be used to distinguish systems by their different cultural identities or include foreign cultural elements into or exclude them from one's own cultural system. Especially literary translations are a way for an author to establish a literary or ideological lineage—a connection with a desired foreign tradition or foreign author regarded as role model. The author will discuss this specific usage of translation by taking the example of modern Martin Heidegger's incorporation of Plato's works into his philosophical system by translating his writings into "Heideggerian" discourse-German.

What is possible in literature and literary translation can equally be applied to philosophical texts. It is mostly the same mechanism at work here. A philosopher translates an admired original by an admired philosophical role model into his/her own language and connects himself/herself with the work of the philosopher and the philosopher.

An interesting case of this method is Martin Heidegger. Heidegger prominently claimed that only old Greek and German can be considered languages in which the *Sein* (the being) calls itself by its own name—expresses itself through language. Heidegger does not attempt to prove this claim but presents this statement as a fact. His aim was not only to link German philosophy to the Greek tradition but rather to establish a connection of his own philosophy to Plato's philosophical discourse. Of course Heidegger's Plato is not Plato anymore but Platonism speaking through Heideggerianism. One looks at the two different translations of Plato's *Höhlengleichnis*—one by Otto Apelt and the other one by Heidegger—reveal striking differences between the two texts:

Sokrates. Wenn sie nun miteinander reden könnten, glaubst du da, daß, wenn einer der Vorübergehenden gerade etwas sagte, sie dann die gehörten Worte einem anderen zulegen würden, als dem jeweilig vorüberziehenden Schatten?

Glaukon. Nein, beim Zeus.

Sokrates. Durchweg also würden diese Gefangenen nichts anderes für wahr gelten lassen als die Schatten der künstlichen Gegenstände.

Glaukon. Notwendig. (Platon, 1998, p. 270)

The German used in the translation is clearly recognizable as modern standard German. The structure is dialogic just like Plato's dialogues. The translation therefore shows strong similarities with the original texts

<sup>2</sup> The above mentioned possibility of enriching a cultural system through literary translations can be illustrated by taking a closer look at texts commonly attributed to German culture—texts believed to be pure expressions of German identity—such as the world famous fairy tales of the Grimm brothers. There is most likely hardly anyone who would doubt the inseparable connection of these alleged folk tales of the German people with German culture. And yet, not all of the fairy tales originated in Germany but are rather translations from foreign tales into German. Canonical texts like *Snow White* or *Little Red Riding Hood* are supposedly of French origin. The aim of the brothers Grimm was to find a way to let the German *Geist* express itself in a typical German motif system: "Jacob Grimm did hint at a connection between cultural ways of thinking presented in traditional stories and the blood of the German people" (Roberts, 2010, p. 34). The fairy tales of the Grimms represent re-combinations and re-accentuations of foreign cultural systems' tales that now coexist as translations in German. There language (German) is what ties them together. By translating these foreign texts into German they become part of the German cultural system.

which it tries to represent as accurately as possible in the German version. Not so Heidegger's (1997, p. 207) translation:

Wenn sie nun aber imstande wären, miteinander das Erblickte an-und durchzusprechen, glaubst du nicht, sie wurden das, was sie da sehen, für das Seiende halten? Dazu wären sie genötigt.

Wie aber nun, wenn dies Gefängnis auch noch von der ihnen gegenüberliegenden Wand her (auf die allein sie ständig hinblicken) einen Widerhall hätte? Sooft dann einer von denen, die hinter den Gefesselten vorbeigehen (und die Dinge vorbeitrugen), sich verlauten ließe, glaubst du wohl, daß sie etwas anderes für das Sprechende hielten als den von ihnen vorbeiziehenden Schatten? Nichts anderes, beim Zeus! Sagte er. Ganz und gar, entgegnete ich, würden dann auch die also Gefesselten nichts anderes als die Schatten der Gerätschaften für das Unverborgene halten. Dies wäre durchaus nötig, sagte er.

Heidegger's version of Plato's dialogue shows strong differences at first glance. The most striking one is that the dialogic structure is given up. Heidegger creates more of a prose version with—it seems rather as if one speaker explains Plato's Höhlengleichnis. The other participants in the dialogue become more or less actors of minor importance. Idiosyncratic wordings, like "das Erblickte an-und durchzusprechen" and Heidegger's favorite "Unverborgenheit"—an expression coined by him as thorough translation of the Greek *αληθεια* (Heidegger claimed that the usual German translation *αληθεια* ("Wahrheit" = truth) was wrong and came up with his own reinterpretation and retranslation of this old Greek term. By doing so Heidegger furthermore re-accentuates the German language by retranslating Greek terms and thereby including them into the framework of German. Through conning new "German" terms, Heidegger is also able to enrich the German language, although his unique philosophical terminology can really only work in Heidegger's philosophical system that uses his personal Heideggerian discourse language.

In fact, Heidegger's Plato translation does not only connect his philosophy to Plato's but quite obviously to the philosophical tradition of German ideals because his translation is very similar to the one that Schleiermacher presented with his German Plato:

Ein gar wunderliches Bild, sprach er, stellst du dar und wunderliche Gefangene. Uns ganz ähnliche, entgegnete ich. Denn zuerst, meinst du wohl, daß dergleichen Menschen von sich selbst und voneinander je etwas anderes gesehen haben als die Schatten, welche das Feuer auf die ihnen gegenüberstehende Wand der Höhle wirft? Wie sollten sie, sprach er, wenn sie gezwungen sind, zeitlebens den Kopf unbeweglich zu halten! Und von dem Vorübergetragenen nicht eben dieses? Was sonst? Wenn sie nun miteinander reden könnten, glaubst du nicht, daß sie auch pflegen würden, dieses Vorhandene zu benennen, was sie sähen? Notwendig. Und wie, wenn ihr Kerker auch einen Widerhall hätte von drüben her, meinst du, wenn einer von den Vorübergehenden spräche, sie würden denken, etwas anderes rede als der eben vorübergehende Schatten? Nein, beim Zeus, sagte er. Auf keine Weise also können diese irgend etwas anderes für das Wahre halten als die Schatten jener Kunstwerke? Ganz unmöglich. (Platon, 1828, p. 361)

Just like Heidegger's translation Schleiermacher's text also is not dialogic the way the other modern adaptation is. As far as the language of Heidegger's translation is concerned, his version is still quite different from Schleiermacher's. Heidegger had to make Plato fit his own discourse language in order to include the ancient Greek philosopher into his own philosophical system. Schleiermacher delivered the structural framework in this translation process whereas Heidegger provided the terminology. Plato himself provided the basic train of thought and the motifs developed in his Höhlengleichnis. But just like in Schleiermacher's German translation of Plato's writings the philosopher of ancient Greece speaks to the German readers through the translation of Heidegger. What makes Heidegger's translation different is that—even more so than

Schleiermacher—Plato speaks to the readers together with Heidegger because Heidegger equips Plato's philosophical thought with his own terminology—a fact that makes Plato and Heidegger co-authors in this process.

### Conclusions

In this research proposal, the author tries to establish a theory with which it can be shown that the choice of what text shall be translated is in itself in many cases programmatic. Certain elements of foreign culture(s) are deemed desirable and therefore worth finding their way into other cultural systems through translation and, through translation: inclusion.

Translation, therefore, is a frequently used device to enrich cultural systems with foreign elements that are then translated into the language of a specific cultural system. The national (or the system language) provides the basis for the definition of the barriers of the cultural system. The system ends where the shared language of the cultural system is not spoken anymore and a different system with a different language—and different cultural customs—begins.

Translation is furthermore a way to establish a certain kind of identity in a cultural system—an identity that is based on particular role models from other cultures or that is found in different historical epochs, such as ancient Greece in the example of German Idealism and the admiration the idealists showed for everything Greek.

Translation enables the translator to re-accentuate or certain elements of the original text or even change parts that seem less useful for his/her cause. This means that in some cases the original text has to be changed in the translation in order to make the text fit in the new cultural context. Inclusion can only be successful with fitting parts. Sometimes simply changing the language will not suffice. Foreign cultural habits might be regarded as too exotic to fit the new context. In cases like that the exotic motifs will have to be replaced with motifs familiar to the cultural systems they are introduced into. In the case of Fischart's Rabelais-translation, the author used French motifs in order to stress the difference between the German cultural system and the French one. The references to French motifs aim at ridiculing French habits. Fischart was careful to incorporate references to German popular culture and tales in order to locate his text entirely in the German cultural system. In some cases, like in the case of the fairy tales by the Grimm brothers, the translation process of foreign tales was so successful that the translators successfully created a German identity by integrating foreign cultural tales into the body of the German popular tradition. The same is true for the Cooper translations of Arno Schmidt who connected his literary works to the texts of his American idol by translating them into Schmidt's own literary style of German. Heidegger presented a version of Plato that seemed more like a product of German idealism mixed with Heideggerian terminology. Plato's thought was still recognizable through the dense and idiosyncratic style of Heidegger's philosophical German, but the truth is that it is Plato speaking through Heidegger's terminology following Schleiermacher's structure. In this lineage of great thinkers and their schools, Plato and Aristotle, naturally, represent the most influential cultural sources due to the fact that their texts stand at the beginning of European culture: "Of course Plato and Aristotle can be incorporated as classics under the principle of classicism, and their texts are canonized under the principle of the canon, thus raising the question why the third principle of hypotheses is necessary" (Assmann, 2011, p. 260). Assmann emphasizes Plato's, Aristotle's, and Homer's standing in Western culture as cultural absolutes, thus making them cultural constants that mark an essential part of Western culture.

By enriching the cultural system a process of diversification can be initiated. The reference systems within the cultural systems contribute to the overall stability of the system by enabling the cultural system to engage in self-referentiality. Luhmann calismthat individuality can be established through self-reference: “Individualität durch Selbstreferenz” (Luhmann, 1987, p. 348). Such self-referential systems are the ideal environment for a national identity to form in a process of autopoiesis:

Selbstreferentielle Systeme sind in dem Sinne geschlossene Systeme, daß sie ihre eigenen Elemente und damit auch ihre eigenen Strukturänderungen selbst produzieren. Es gibt keinen direkten Kausalzugriff der Umwelt auf das System ohne Mitwirkung des Systems. Eben deshalb gibt das System seiner eigenen Struktur ... Kausalität. (Luhmann, 1987, p. 478)

In order to be stable and to be able to produce its own identity the self-reflexive system needs to work with a fixed set of generalized rules and (national) symbols it can refer to in acts of self-referentiality: “Reflexivität setzt in allen Prozessen ein hohes Maß an Generalisierung von Symbolen und Erwartungen voraus, denn nur so kann die Übertragbarkeit der Selektionsleistung von dem reflexiven Vorprozeß auf die intendierten, unmittelbar sachbezogenen Prozesse gewährleistet werden” (Luhmann, 2013, p. 92).

It is now likely that the act of translation contributes to complexity in a cultural system by adding foreign cultural elements to it. As a consequence self-referentiality becomes possible because the system is now able to increase its reservoir of symbols it can refer to in an act of reflexivity. So, ironically, the fact that foreign cultural elements are imported into the system through translation at the same time increase the degree of cultural autonomy in a system.

Another important aspect that needs further research is the self-representation of language which is the case when foreign terms are not translated. The author described the method of not translating of foreign terms as deliberate exclusion of foreign cultural elements from a system. In that case, it is easy to recognize these foreign particles in a system with a clearly defined national (cultural) language. These foreign elements will stand out when compared against the foil of the shared language. The same is true for foreign cultural customs that do not match the common customs of the cultural system. The official culture can then stabilize itself through references to these foreign elements and shape its identity by distinguishing and distancing itself from these foreign elements.

The situation proposed to examine can be seen as a basic example of the mechanisms at work when transferring cultural customs and symbols into other cultural systems. The programmatic way Fichte demanded a closed national German cultural system with borders defined by a standardized German language shows how the system defines its Sinn Grenzen through Sprachgrenzen by distinguishing itself from systems with different cultural symbols. The way the idealists tried to establish German identity can be regarded as laboratory experiment where identity was intentionally created under a set of rules. The most striking aspect about this process is that the whole theoretical concept was there before the actual plan was initiated. The mechanisms employed to achieve a distinguishable German identity can be seen as paradigmatic for processes of cultural communication and identity forming in all cultural systems.

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