

Linguistic or Ideological Shifts? The Problem-oriented Study of Transformations as a Methodological Filter¹

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It is not true that literal translators translate only literally and free translators only freely. Both types of translators employ the same transformations ('shifts') more or less, but for different reasons. The difference lies in their tolerance of source language interference. Literal translators resort to transformations when a literal rendering would result in an ungrammatical or misleading translation, whereas free translators employ transformations to produce a text that sounds natural in the target language. When the study of a translation confronts us with a rendering that seems to deviate from the source text, i.e. smells of interpretation / ideology, we should first ascertain that the transformation in case does not spring from grammatical, stylistic, logical etc. reasons. A try-out of the literal alternative(s) the translator has rejected is often enlightening: it often shows why he preferred a transformation. This provides us with a filter to avoid rash conclusions, which is welcome in the study of both modern and ancient translations.

Introduction

The role of interpretation in early translations is a major point of discussion in the two disciplines of my interest: Translation Studies and Septuagint Studies. In July 2004 I attended the Leuven Colloquium on 'The Septuagint and Messianism'. The central question was to what extent messianic tendencies can be detected in the Septuagint. In other words: to what extent can we see the Septuagint as a document of its contemporary history? This presupposes the methodological question: how can we distinguish interpretative and linguistic factors? I was surprised that of the lectures I attended only Prof. Aejmelaeus' paper was explicitly methodological. Other speakers gave interesting lectures but did not address methodological issues (Knibb 2006). The lack of methodological clarity made it difficult to communicate. I saw that even scholars who were working on the same Biblical book talked at cross-purposes. There were two specialists on the book of Psalms who represent opposite viewpoints. Dr. Schaper (Tübingen) holds that those renderings that

¹ This article has been published earlier in Voitila, A. & J. Jokiranta (eds.) 2008. *Scripture in Transition: Essays on Septuagint, Hebrew Bible, and Dead Sea Scrolls in Honour of Raija Sollamo*. Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 126. Leiden: Brill. 107–125.

appear to be ‘deviations’ from the Hebrew source text should first and foremost be considered as witnesses to the translator’s ideology or as references to historical situations. Prof. Pietersma (Toronto), on the other hand, explains ‘deviations’ in terms of his ‘Interlinear Model’. In his view the translator operated primarily on the micro-level so that most shifts have to be explained linguistically. If carried to extremes, the former position can lead to unbridled fancy, whereas the latter can lead to historical blindness. I think it is a challenge to do justice to the underlying intention of both positions (Van der Kooij 2000, 379).

In Translation Studies such controversies are also well-known. Translators frequently accuse each other of falsifying the style or intention of an author and often do so in the public press. This has been the case since Jerome and his rival Rufinus. Sometimes such discussions take on a scholarly garb. Twenty years ago Kitty van Leuven-Zwart published a dissertation in which she developed an intricate model for the comparison of source text and target text. She applied it to a Dutch translation of *Don Quixote* and argued that the numerous shifts on the micro-level had led to a totally false picture of the hero on the macro-level (Van Leuven-Zwart 1984). Nine years later a colleague of the *Quixote*-translator, Peter Verstegen, produced a seething reply in his dissertation. He demonstrated that the majority of the mentioned shifts had arisen from linguistic needs and that Van Leuven’s picture of *Don Quixote* as alternately sane and insane was beside the mark. In one breath the author, a prize-winning translator, denounced the discipline of Translation Studies as a waste of time (Verstegen 1993). In other countries there are similar debates (Hermans 1999, 1–6).

The approaches of early, linguistic Translation Studies can still be of good use for the study of transformations. Without careful study of the micro-level it is impossible to arrive at reliable conclusions about the translator’s method (Van der Louw 2006). The first reason is purely quantitative: while the most important decisions are made on the macro-level according to modern theorists, the micro-level is where the *greatest number* of decisions is made. Second, study of the micro-level may be quite appropriate for ancient translations, since their translators neither always followed a macro-level approach nor necessarily departed from a postulate of stylistic ‘equivalence’. And if they did, who says that all micro-level decisions logically follow from the overall approach? Third, the normative approach in the often popular textbooks of translating hangs closely together with the practice of translating and is of obvious value to research on how translators work. Fourth, a bottom-up approach can serve as a methodological filter for assumptions that are made on the macro-level.

The purpose of my paper is to show that identifying transformations and labelling them forces us to ask further questions which will improve our methods.

From ancient translations I will then illustrate how the problem-oriented study of transformations works out on different levels of language.

Why Are Transformations Applied?

Transformations or shifts are micro-level changes that occur in the transfer from one language to another. They were often central to early textbooks of translating, which listed them, with many examples from published translations.² Transformations were categorized according to the semantic relationship they express: generalization ('spear' → 'weapon'), specification ('weapon' → 'spear'), omission, addition, explicitation, literal translation etc. But the classifications by the various scholars were not always consistent and differed considerably from one author to another. For the purpose of micro-level research I compiled a catalogue of transformations from different textbooks.³

Transformations are not necessarily applied consciously, as process-oriented research has shown. Translators do not think: 'Antonymic and converse translation haven't worked. Let me try a specification.' Rather, a translator is faced with a problem, upon which solutions suggest themselves to his mind, the ones requiring least effort first (Chesterman 1997, 89–116; Zabalbeascoa 2000). Larose (1989, 17) rightly says:⁴

Or, les procédés dont parlent Vinay et Darbelnet ne sont pas des algorithmes de traduction, mais des étiquettes apposées à des résultats.

Now the identification of transformations – I prefer this term over the somewhat more burdened 'shifts' – is in itself not the essential part of the research. For Septuagint Studies it is a step forward, though, because of the terminological refinement. Until now, everything that seems to deviate from a literal translation has been termed 'free rendering' (Wilk 2003, *passim*). Lumping everything together leads to methodological confusion. It entails a wrong and uninformed picture of

2 Munday 2001, Chapter 4; Stolze 1997, chs. 4–5.

3 See Van der Louw 2007, 57–90, and for a different classification Molina & Hurtado Albir 2002. I drew mainly from Vinay & Darbelnet 1997, Langeveld 1986, Newmark 1981 and 1988.

4 See also Molina & Hurtado Albir 2002. Although they make the point that transformation labels describe the result, not the strategies by which a translator solves problems, they confusingly speak of 'translation techniques'.

the translator.⁵ The advantage of labelling is that it raises the real question: *why* do translators apply transformations (Toury 1995, 85)? The answer is obvious: because a literal translation does not work!⁶ Literal translation is always the easiest and fastest method.⁷ Even the so-called ‘free translator’ proceeds literally most of the time, at least in prose. A transformation is used to solve the translational problem that arises from a literal rendering. This has an important methodological implication. *Behind each transformation stands a literal rendering that has been rejected.*

Thus when we encounter a ‘free rendering’ we should not only categorize it as a transformation, but also investigate its rationale by studying the literal translation that was *not* chosen. In many cases the translational problem then surfaces quickly. The rejected literal rendering – often there is more than one possibility – should be scrutinized first from a linguistic angle, then from the viewpoint of style, logic, communicative purpose, culture and world view / ideology (or theology).⁸ This order should be kept, for where it is simply the case that the norms of the target language have been obeyed we cannot accuse a translator of adding his own interpretation. I have been a translator for ten years and I do not like my colleagues, even the deceased, to be accused unjustly.

There is one question which merits a separate treatment, but which I cannot leave unmentioned: if the translator rejects a literal rendering and solves his translational problem, how does he do this? Does he simply take the ‘next-literal’ rendering or does he avail himself of the opportunity for further-reaching operations? If we suspect the latter, we should look at the rejected next-literal rendering too.

5 A typical reaction I get is: ‘Why do you want to explain “free renderings”? *Of course* a free translator employs free renderings. What else would you expect?’ But on further discussion my interlocutors realize they still have to explain something. We may take for granted that free translators employ free renderings, but then in many cases the free translator employs *literal* renderings. Why does he do *that*? ‘Well, apparently he didn’t see the need for a free translation here.’ With this admission we introduce the notion of necessity. Of course the translator did not indulge in unlimited freedom, for then he would never finish his work. Translating is like other crafts in balancing purpose and means in every case.

6 Cf. Weaver 1989, a description of his ponderings while translating a paragraph by Carlo Emilio Gadda.

7 I do not speak of large-scale translational abridgement. This becomes clear when we imagine two equally experienced translators translating the same text, one operating literally and the other with the objective of ‘stylistic equivalence’. The latter adds stylistic constraints to the demand of ‘equivalence of content’, which increases the difficulty. This was proved by process-oriented research. Experiments showed that experienced translators, sense-oriented as they are, pay attention to style, keep the needs of the target audience in mind and exhibit macro-structural text awareness, whereas beginning translators are, as a rule, sign-oriented and stick to words. Hence, experienced translators identify more translational problems and spend more time solving them. As a consequence, they do not always work quicker than beginning translators. Cf. Bell 1998; Jääskeläinen & Tirkkonen-Condit 1991; Jonasson 1998.

8 Aejmelaeus 2006: “Man darf sich nicht vom ersten Eindruck der theologischen Exegese täuschen lassen.”

When we have found out, for all transformations in a considerable body of text, on what levels the translator identified his translational problems, we get an impression of the translational norms that guided him (Toury 1995, 56ff., 93ff; Schäffner 1999). The relationship between the motives behind the transformations will also reveal something about the hierarchy of these norms in the mind of the translator. I do not mean to suggest that this hierarchy is always conscious. A beginning translator, for example, may start with unconscious assumptions about ‘translating faithfully’ and a hidden hierarchy will stamp his work.

Let us put these considerations into practice, starting with an example by a prolific author from the field of Translation Studies, the late André Lefevere (1992, 40). He writes:

[T]he Aramaic Jesus Christ is supposed to have spoken did not have a copula. He can therefore never have said: ‘This is my body’ when pointing at a loaf of bread. The copula was put in by translators for ideological rather than linguistic reasons.

Now the Greek text of Mark 14:22 reads τοῦτο ἐστὶν τὸ σῶμά μου ‘this is my body.’ Since no Aramaic parent text of the gospels is known, we could reconstruct it as *דְּן גְּשְׁמִי דְּן גּוּפִי*.⁹ A more literal translation, without the objected copula, would run *τοῦτο τὸ σῶμά μου. But this means ‘this body of mine’ and is not a sentence at all! The Greek copula is obligatory here. In other words, it was put in for purely linguistic reasons. The theological dispute about the copula ‘est’ and the nature of Christ’s presence in the Eucharist raged in the Middle Ages, more than a thousand years later. Thus Lefevere’s remark falls flat on its face from both viewpoints.

We will now review some different categories of rejected literal renderings.

A Literal Translation Is Not Possible

In many cases a literal translation is not possible, as will be illustrated by the following examples. The first is taken from a bilingual Graeco-Aramaic inscription:¹⁰

ἦτις τὸ κάλλος ἀμείμητον εἶχε	טב ושפיר יהוה
she possessed a matchless beauty	היך זי בר אינש לא דמע יהוה מן טבות
	she was so excellent and beautiful that no-body could compare with her in excellence

9 The former is proposed by Jeremias 1967, 191–194, the latter by Casey 1998, 219f., 239. I thank Dr. H. Sysling for the references and Prof. T. Muraoka for his comments.

10 H. Donner / W. Röllig 2002. *Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften* (5. Auflage). Wiesbaden: Harassowitz (= KAI), nr. 276. It is not certain whether the Greek is indeed the source text, but in either case the transformation can be adduced under this heading.

Compounds of the type ἀμείμητος ‘matchless’ cannot be imitated in Semitic languages. Its semantic components have to be distributed over several words.

Our next example is of a syntactic nature:

Τί τὸ ὄν ἀεί, γένεσιν δὲ οὐκ ἔχον... *Quid est quod semper sit neque ullum habeat ortum... ?¹⁰*

What is that, which has always existed, but does not have an origin?

This change of accidens from participle to finite verb is obligatory, i.e. demanded by the grammar of the target language: classical Latin lacks a participle of *esse*.

Regarding the Septuagint rendering of Proverbs 6:23 the charge of ideology has been brought forward:

כִּי נֵר מִצְוָה וְתוֹרָה אֹר	ὅτι λύχνος ἐντολὴ νόμου καὶ φῶς
וְדֶרֶךְ חַיִּים תּוֹכַחֹת מוֹסֵר	καὶ ὁδὸς ζωῆς ἔλεγχος καὶ παιδεία
for a lamp is the commandment and	for a lamp [is] the commandment of the
the law is a light	law, and a light
and a path of life are reproofs of	and a path of life [is] reproof and
discipline	instruction

Cook (1999, 454) claims the translator deliberately combined the words differently to create a clearer reference to the Mosaic Law.¹¹ In my opinion it is more probable that he avoided a literal translation, since this would result in an inadmissible sentence:

*ὅτι λύχνος ἐντολὴ καὶ νόμος φῶς
lit. ‘for lamp commandment and law light’.

Not only does this contain an awkward double verbless clause, but the chiasmus makes it also difficult, at least for the hearer, to ascertain whether νόμος ‘law’ still belongs to the predicate or already introduces a new subject. The translator solved this problem by the simple transposition of the conjunction καί ‘and’ (change of syntactic function). In the second stich he did the same, probably to make both lines syntactically parallel, as they are in the original.¹² An alternative solution would have been the addition of the copula ἐστίν, but apparently the translator appreciated the proverbial stamp of a Greek verbless clause.

11 The surprising Greek text does not point to a different source text, כִּי נֵר מִצְוָה וְתוֹרָה וְאֹר, ‘for a lamp is the commandment of the *torah* and a light,’ nor should we assume this to be the reading in the mind of the translator.

12 The *Revised English Bible* does the same thing: ‘reproof and correction point the way to life.’

I do not think the tenor of the verse is materially altered by this transformation. The reshuffling of the first stich strengthens the association with Psalm 118 (MT 119):105 ‘Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path’, but it does not make the Law of Moses explicit, which could have been done easily. The international character of the Hebrew Proverbs has thus been preserved.

A Literal Translation Is Possible but Not Natural

Our next category originates where a literal translation would be possible, but not natural. Many implicitations and explicitations of participants have their roots in this consideration as do transpositions and omissions. For example, in Isaiah 1:2 a change of word order is found at the end of the verse, where the personal pronoun has changed place:

והזמה פשעו בי	αὐτοὶ δέ με ἠθέτησαν
but they rebelled against me	but they denied me

The Isaiah translator puts the object pronoun before the verb to arrive at a natural word order, avoiding an enclitic in a final position (Sollamo 2006). Adhering to the Hebrew word order sounds unnatural. Very literal translators, to whom adherence to the word order of the original is important, tolerate such interference.

In Proverbs 6:1 the transformation seems to have contextual implications:

בְּנֵי אִם־עֲרֵבֶתָ לְרֵעֶךָ	Υἱέ, ἐὰν ἐγγυήσῃ σὸν φίλον
My son, if you stand surety for your neighbour...	Son, if you stand surety for a friend of yours...

The translator omits the possessive element (‘my’). Does he want to obscure the fatherhood of the speaker? I do not think so. A literal translation, *υἱέ μου, is possible, but in the Septuagint it is rare.¹³ This is not the natural way to say it in Greek. Already in the more literal LXX-Pentateuch בְּנֵי ‘my son’ is therefore often rendered with vocatives τέκνον ‘child’ or υἱέ ‘son’. These renderings display a non-obligatory omission of the possessive suffix (pronoun).

The following example contains a typical Latin idiom, which is difficult to transfer literally into most European languages (Reichmann 1943, 80):

¹³ E.g. 2 Samuel 13:25 μὴ δὴ, υἱέ μου, μὴ πορευθῶμεν πάντες ἡμεῖς ‘no, my son, let not all of us go’.

post captam urbem
after the taken city

μετὰ τὴν ὑπὸ Γάλλοις γενομένην ἄλωσιν
after its capture by the Gauls

A literal translation would be understandable but unidiomatic Greek. This accounts for the change of word class from participle to noun. The explicitation of ‘the Gauls’, on the other hand, has no grammatical motivation. A literal translation would have been good Greek. Rather, information has been made explicit for the benefit of Greek readers who are less familiar with Roman history than Romans are (communicative purpose).

Of course, greetings belong to the realm of idiom. This is an example of different closing benedictions in a bilingual inscription (idiom):

‘may He bless / may be blessed’ יברך ἵν' τύχαι ἀγαθᾶι [sic] ‘for good luck’¹⁴

Style

The next category falls outside the sphere of the literal translator, generally speaking, for it concerns the choice not between good and bad, but between good and better:

φαίνεται μοι κῆρος ἴσος θεοῖσιν. *Ille mi par esse deo videtur.*¹⁵

That man seems to me equal to gods. That man seems to me equal to (a) god.

The plural ‘gods’ in Sappho’s poem has been rendered by Catullus as singular ‘god’. Is he perhaps smuggling in monotheism or is style his concern? The former possibility is *a priori* unlikely for all we know about Catullus. Let us therefore try out a literal translation. It would run **Ille mi par esse diis videtur* (or *deis*). Metrically this would be all right, but it would sound worse with its nasty series of *i-* and *e-*sounds. With the singular *deo* Catullus avoids this while at the same time imitating Sappho’s *i-o* alternation. Since *deus* can mean ‘the god’ but also ‘a god’ there is not necessarily a difference in meaning.

A similar example can be gleaned from LXX-Proverbs 6:13.

קָרַחַ בְּעֵינַי מַלְל בְּרַגְלֵי ‘Ο δ’ αὐτὸς ἐννεύει ὀφθαλμῶ, σημαίνει δὲ
מִרְהָ בְּאַצְבָּעֵתָיו: ποδί, διδάσκει δὲ ἐννεύμασιν δακτύλων

¹⁴ Closing blessing of an inscription, KAI nr. 39 (389 BCE).

¹⁵ From Seele 1995, 46. I thank Dr. R. ten Kate (Groningen) for his help.

He winks with his eye, speaks with his foot, /gives signs with his fingers. The same [man] winks with an eye, gives signs with a foot, /teaches with the signs of fingers.

In the Hebrew text the mischief-maker teaches ‘with his fingers’ (בְּצַבְצָבָיו), in the translation ‘with *the signs of* fingers’ (ἐννεύμασιν δακτύλων). This looks like an addition for clarity, but neither grammatically nor semantically can I find any reason for it. It is again rewarding to imagine how the alternative without addition would have read, for this makes the rationale clear at once *... δὲ ποδί, διδάσκει δὲ δακτύλοις. It is a coincidence that a literal rendering results in such a remarkable alliteration, but in this instance one feels overwhelmed. The ancient teachers of rhetoric knew that there is only a dim line between alliteration and cacophony.¹⁶ Here the alliteration becomes tongue-breaking and suggests stammering. The addition of ἐννεύμασιν tones it down and makes it an acceptable and still notable piece of alliteration.

Logic And Coherence

Logic and coherence are important considerations in rejecting a literal rendering that is in itself grammatically and stylistically appropriate. Such is the case in Isaiah 1:10:

שְׁמַעו דְּבַר־יְהוָה קְצִינֵי סְדֹם	Ἄκούσατε λόγον κυρίου, ἄρχοντες Σοδομων·
הֲאִזְנוּ תוֹרַת אֱלֹהֵינוּ עִם עֲמֻקָּה	προσέχετε νόμον θεοῦ, λαὸς Γομορρας.
Hear the word of the Lord,	Hear the word of the Lord,
rulers of Sodom,	rulers of Sodoma,
listen to the teaching of <u>our</u> God,	be attentive of the law of God,
people of Gomorra!	people of Gomorra!

The possessive suffix in אֱלֹהֵינוּ ‘our God’ is omitted in Greek. This smells of ideology. A recent study claims: “durch die Auslassung des (...) Possessivsuffixes bei אֱלֹהֵים erinnert die Wendung an νόμος θεοῦ (...); sie bezieht sich demnach auf das schriftlich fixierte ‚Gesetz Gottes‘. Zugleich unterstreicht die Auslassung die Allgemeingültigkeit dieses Gesetzes” (Wilk 2003, 21). This is not correct, to my mind. For a clearer picture we need to identify the translational problem first. Comparing modern Bible translations is often helpful for that purpose.

(10) Ihr Machthaber von Sodom, hört, was der HERR sagt! Du Volk von Gomorra, vernimm die Weisung unseres Gottes!

¹⁶ Lausberg 1973, § 968–969, 975–976; cf. Demetrius, *De elocutione* (ed. Rhys Roberts) § 255, who connects it to the ‘forcible style’.

(11) »Was soll ich mit euren vielen Opfern?« fragt der HERR. (*Gute Nachricht*)

As the quotation marks indicate, vs 10 introduces the direct speech of vs 11. The Hebrew word *torah* denotes the immediately following divine speech, and is translated as 'Weisung'. This rendering stays close to the primary meaning of *torah* 'teaching, direction'. Nevertheless, the tradition from the LXX-Pentateuch of translating *torah* with νόμος 'law' was so deeply rooted (Segal 1987) that the Isaiah translator followed it. As a consequence νόμος 'law' can no longer be viewed as an introduction by the prophet of God's direct speech of vs 11. Rather, vs 10 turns into a general appeal, and there is no longer any reason to assume a change of speaker between vss 10 and 11. The impression is, then, that God speaks in 1:10–11. And in that case it is clear why 'be attentive of the law of our God' cannot come from God's mouth, and, hence, why the pronoun must be omitted. As this transformation can be explained text-immanently, theological explanations are out of order. The *reception* of the translated text may have stressed that God is universal, but such was not the translator's *intention*.

Under the heading of logic and coherence I would like to subsume those transformations that are not necessary in themselves, but that flow from earlier decisions of the translator (Levý 1967; Wilss 1997). Every decision narrows down the options further on. In contrast with modern translations this holds also true for mistakes or renderings the translator would have avoided in a later stage of his developed competence. It seems that the Septuagint translators often did not go back to correct earlier renderings, but grappled with the consequences later in the text. A reason for this puzzling behaviour might be that they did not have word processors but wrote on very costly materials on which corrections were often visible.

A striking instance is Proverbs 6:1, where the Hebrew text reads as follows:

בְּנֵי אִם־עֲרַבְתָּ לְרֵעִךָ	My son, if you stand surety for someone else,
תִּקְעֵתָ לְזָר כַּפְיֶךָ	[if you] have struck your hands with a stranger...

The 'basic meaning' of רֵעַ is 'friend', but it is most often used in the generic sense of 'neighbour, someone else', as it is the case here.¹⁷ Likewise זָר means 'stranger', but it appears often in the weakened sense of 'someone else' too. From other places we know that these generic meanings were known to the LXX translators. Now the Proverbs translator renders רֵעַ with the specific 'friend' and

¹⁷ Cf. the *Revised English Bible* 'if you give yourself in pledge to another person.' So already Symmachus and Theodotion: πλησίον.

lets his decision stand, which forces him to make several transformations. A literal translation based on this choice would have read:

*Υἱέ, ἐὰν ἐγγυήσῃ σὸν φίλον, *Son, if you stand surety for your friend,
 παραδώσῃς σὴν χεῖρα ἀλλοτρίῳ... [if] you deliver your hand to a foreigner...

Adherence to standard renderings in this synonymous distich has the result that the same person is first called a friend and then a stranger. The word ἄλλοτρίω ‘stranger’ cannot be translated literally any more, since the person in question has already been called a friend, and a friend cannot be a stranger. It is therefore strengthened to ‘enemy’ (specification). At the same time this transformation enabled the translator, with his Greek aversion to repetition, to turn a synonymous distich into a contrastive one:

Υἱέ, ἐὰν ἐγγυήσῃ σὸν φίλον, Son, if you stand surety for your friend,
 παραδώσῃς σὴν χεῖρα ἐχθρῷ... [if] you deliver your hand to an enemy...

In 6:2–3 the translator is forced into further transformations because of the same decision.

Communicative Purpose

The communicative purpose (or ‘pragmatic function’) of the text is an important factor behind translators’ decisions. Style makes a text attractive, which is essential for communication. But there is more. The text has to convey a message, which should not be hampered by information gaps, incomprehensible metaphors, misunderstandings, unintended humour etc. For this purpose implicit information is made explicit, the sense of a metaphor is rendered instead of the image, ambiguities are resolved, comical effects or wrong implications are suppressed.

Genesis 2:9 confronts us with an unexpected addition. The Hebrew text speaks of ‘the tree of the knowing of good and evil’, but the Septuagint goes beyond this by speaking of τὸ ξύλον τοῦ εἰδέναι γνωστὸν καλοῦ καὶ πονηροῦ ‘the tree of the knowing of *what is knowable* of good and evil’. Scholars usually consider it an exegetical rendering that deliberately limits the width of the original: the eating of this fruit does not give absolute knowledge, because man will be limited in his knowledge: ‘there are dimensions of good and evil that cannot be known.’ This conclusion is a bit rash. Let us first explore the phraseology of ‘knowing good and evil’ more fully. The phrase occurs four times.

- 2:9 τὸ ξύλον τοῦ εἰδέναι γνωστὸν καλοῦ καὶ πονηροῦ
 2:17 ἀπὸ δὲ τοῦ ξύλου τοῦ γινώσκειν καλὸν καὶ πονηρόν...
 3:5 καὶ ἔσεσθε ὡς θεοὶ γινώσκοντες καλὸν καὶ πονηρόν
 3:22 ὡς εἷς ἐξ ἡμῶν τοῦ γινώσκειν καλὸν καὶ πονηρόν

[English translation of LXX]

- 2:9 the tree of the knowing of what is knowable of good and evil
 2:17 but from the tree of knowing good and evil...
 3:5 and you will be as gods, knowing good and evil
 3:22 [Adam has become] as one of us, to know good and evil

In 2:17; 3:5, 22 the Septuagint gives a literal rendering of the Hebrew. It would have been perfectly possible to translate *τὸ ξύλον τοῦ γινώσκειν καλὸν καὶ πονηρόν 'the tree of knowing good and evil' in 2:9 as well. Yet something was added to the translation of 2:9. Note that only the first occurrence of this phrase received a special treatment. I would propose that the rendering in 2:9 is meant as an interpretative aid to the remaining occurrences. In my opinion the translator wanted to make sure that 'knowing good and evil' was not interpreted as having practical experience with, i.e. being *infected* by good and evil, for that would have grave theological consequences in 3:22, but only 'knowing what is knowable of good and evil'. The same issue is addressed by Targum Onkelos with its rendering in 2:9 'and the tree the eaters of whose fruits will wisely discern between good and evil.'

The translators further deal with the different nuances of 'heart' in Hebrew and Greek.¹⁸ In Hebrew לֵב is the centre of the intellect, καρδία is rather the seat of the passions, roughly speaking.¹⁹ The desired notion is expressed in Greek by ἔνδεια φρενῶν 'lack of wits / brains (lit. midriff)', which constitutes a modification. The considerations guiding the LXX-translator apparently appealed to Jerome. Normally he rendered his parent text quite literally, but in Proverbs 6:32 he followed the Septuagint:

qui autem adulter est propter cordis inopiam perdet animam suam.

18 As in, e.g., Proverbs 6:21, 25 and Isaiah 1:16.

19 The use of καρδία for 'intellect' was mainly restricted to Stoic philosophy, to which the translator apparently did not want to subscribe with a literal translation. The Stoic belief that the soul was governed by the heart had received hard blows since the discovery of the neural system and its connections to the brain by the Alexandrian (!) scientists Erasistratus and Herophilus (c. 280 BC), but Chrysippus of Soloi (3rd century BC) continued to defend it. Cf. Tieleman 1996 (I thank Prof. Simo Knuuttila of Helsinki University for this reference). Neither did the translator subscribe to the opposite (Platonic) school by using ἐγκεφαλός 'brain', but he used the everyday term, unburdened with philosophy.

Culture

A separate class of transformations points to cultural differences. These should be taken in the widest sense of the word, to include material culture, as in Proverbs 6:21, where it says about injunctions of parents:

קשרם על-לבך תמיד ענבם על-גרגרתך: bind them upon your heart always, put them around your neck.	ἄφασαι δὲ αὐτοὺς ἐπὶ σῆ ψυχῆ διὰ παντὸς καὶ ἐγκλοίσωσαι ἐπὶ σῶ τραχήλῳ but bind them upon your soul always and put [them] as a chain around your neck.
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Notable is the rendering of לב 'heart' with ψυχή 'soul'. It would be tempting to relate it to the Greek concept of the soul. But what bothered the translator here? He felt a problem with the metaphor. To understand this, we look at the very similar Proverbs 7:3:

ἐπίγραψον δὲ ἐπὶ τὸ πλάτος τῆς καρδίας σου
 write them [my words] on the tablet of your heart.

This metaphor is clear. Words can be written on a tablet, and writing on the tablet of your heart is a metaphor for memorizing. Now the metaphor of Proverbs 6:21a is clear only in the Israelite context. Seals were often worn on a cord around the neck, so that the seal was close to the heart (Genesis 38:18; Song of Songs 8:6). In the Hellenistic world seals were worn on rings, so that it is understandable that in Genesis 38:18 חותם 'seal' is rendered as δακτύλιος 'ring' and the 'cord' is turned into a 'necklace'. This cultural difference made the metaphor in Proverbs 6:21a difficult to understand. The translator wanted to assist a metaphorical understanding and turned לב 'heart' into ψυχή 'soul' (modification).

An institutional difference can be traced in Proverbs 6:33, which describes what will happen to a man who commits adultery with a married woman:

נגע-וקלון ימצא לחתתו לא תמחה He will 'find' plague and shame and his shame shall not be wiped off.	Ὀδύνας τε καὶ ἀτιμίας ὑποφέρει, τὸ δὲ ὄνειδος αὐτοῦ οὐκ ἐξαλειφθήσεται εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα. He endures pains and dishonours and his disgrace will not be wiped off in eternity.
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The specification of מצא 'to find, experience' into ὑποφέρω 'to endure' is obligatory, since εὕρισκω 'to find' does not express the notion of experiencing evil. The chosen term also suggests longer duration, which fits well into the adaptation of this verse.

The Hebrew *עגב* ‘stroke, plague’ is only here rendered as *ὀδύνας* ‘pains’, alliterating with *ὄνειδος* ‘disgrace’. The Greek text stresses the subjective element, the pain felt by the adulterer as a consequence of his deeds. This transformation has no linguistic roots. With some minor adaptations a literal translation would be quite acceptable:

*Πληγὴν τε καὶ ἀτιμίαν ὑποφέρει / τὸ δὲ ὄνειδος αὐτοῦ οὐκ ἐξαλειφθήσεται.
He endures a stroke and dishonour / and his disgrace will not be wiped off.

The relevant background here is cultural. In the Hebrew text the adulterer sets his very *נפשו* ‘life’ at risk (32). He will literally suffer *עגב* ‘strokes’ (33) and become the target of the husband’s *נקמה* ‘revenge’ (34), which he cannot escape by paying *קנין* ‘compensation’ (35). This presupposes a society where disputes were settled privately or in small courts such as elders in the city-gate. An adulterer and the woman concerned were liable to a death penalty.²⁰ In the Septuagint, however, the adulterer risks his *ψυχή* ‘soul’ (32). He will suffer *ὀδύνας τε καὶ ἀτιμίας* ‘pain and dishonour’. The outraged husband will not take revenge, but bring him to trial, *κρίσις* (34). A ransom may settle the affair legally, but it will not extinguish the husband’s enmity. The Greek text presupposes a more centralized society with a professional law-court, in which an adulterer is punished but not killed.²¹ The translator has culturally adapted the text to a new situation. This also explains why *ὀδύνας τε καὶ ἀτιμίας*²² ‘pains and dishonours’ are plural. Since LXX does not imply the execution of the adulterer, he will survive and feel pains and dishonours repeatedly. After all this it will be no surprise that the addition of *εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα* ‘in eternity’ stems from the translator. It is at odds with the Hebrew text, where the fate of the adulterer is sealed (with Baumgartner 1890, 73f. contra de Lagarde 1863, 25).

Ideology

When we have checked the rejected literal translation to find out why it was rejected, and have thus hopefully filtered out everything that does not point to interpretative colouring by the translator, we are left with some pretty convincing instances of interpretation and modification of the source text, which unmistakably point to the

20 Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:22ff.; Ezekiel 23:45ff.

21 From Sirach 23:18–26, dealing with the consequences of adultery but silent about a death penalty, it is usually concluded that a death penalty for adultery had become theoretical in Hellenistic times (except for cases of *Lynchjustiz*). This accords with Athenian sources stating that an adulterer may not be killed, e.g. Demosthenes, *Orationes* 23 (In Aristocratem), 53; Aristotle, *Ath. Pol.* 57,3. Cf. *Der neue Pauly: Enzyklopädie der Antike* 3, 900. The laws of Alexandria were based on Athenian law, cf. Rupprecht 1994, 67.

22 The Hebrew *קליון* is often rendered literally with *ἀτιμία* ‘dishonour’ (singular).

world view, ideology or theology of the translator or of his audience (!). Our first example comes from Exodus 4:24, by no means the freest translation within the Septuagint.

וַיְהִי בַדֶּרֶךְ בְּמִלּוֹן	Ἐγένετο δὲ ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ ἐν τῷ καταλύματι
וַיִּפְגַּשְׁהוּ יְהוָה	συνήντησεν αὐτῷ ἄγγελος κυρίου
וַיִּבְקֹשׁ הַמַּיִת	καὶ ἐζήτει αὐτὸν ἀποκτεῖναι.
And it came to pass on the way at a lodging place, that YHWH met him [Moses] and tried to kill him.	And it came to pass on the way at the lodging place, that <i>an angel of the Lord</i> met him [Moses] and tried to kill him.

This transformation is prompted, not by linguistic or stylistic constraints, but by the reluctance to depict the Lord as a man with a murderous intention: not the Lord, but merely his angel tried to kill Moses. Understandably, theologically motivated renderings are more frequent in ‘freely translated’ Septuagint books (Tov 1999).

Indeed, the first example in LXX-Isaiah is encountered soon (1:4),

נֶאֱצַו אֶת־תְּרוֹשֵׁי יִשְׂרָאֵל	παρωργίσατε τὸν ἅγιον τοῦ Ἰσραηλ
they have rejected the Holy One of Israel	you have made angry the Holy One of Israel

For our purpose the change of 3rd into 2nd person plural, which harmonizes the participants, is a side issue. More germane is the added article before ‘Israel’. Sometimes the name Ἰσραηλ functions as a genitive without the article, e.g. in 1:24 οἱ ἰσχύοντες Ἰσραηλ ‘the mighty ones of Israel’. Strictly speaking, the article is non-obligatory. But in 1:4 the article is necessary to avoid the misreading *τὸν ἅγιον Ἰσραηλ ‘the holy Israel’. At the same time, the article makes it impossible in a manuscript without interpunction to read ‘Israel’ as a vocative that introduces 1:5. The *theological element* in the translation is that God is not ‘rejected’, but ‘made angry’. For תְּרוֹשׁ modern lexica give as meaning: qal ‘to spurn’, pi. ‘to discard, reject’. Similar translations can be found throughout the LXX, but only in collocations where God is not the object.²³ Wherever in Hebrew God is ‘rejected’, the verb is rendered with the verb παροξύνω ‘to provoke, make angry’²⁴ or with its synonym παροργίζω. And where God’s words or laws are ‘rejected’, the LXX uses βλασφημέω

23 It is rendered with ἀπωθέω ‘to push away’ Jeremiah 23:17; ἀθετέω ‘to set at naught’ 1 Kingdoms (MT 1 Samuel) 2:17; μυκτηρίζω ‘to turn up the nose at’ etc.

24 Numbers 14:11, 23; 16:30; Deuteronomy 31:20; 32:19; (...) Isaiah 5:24; 60:14 etc.

'to blaspheme' besides (Isaiah 52:5).²⁵ But in more literally translated books we do find the harsh notion that God or His words are rejected.²⁶ Thus the meaning of some verbs, retained in profane contexts, can be weakened in theologically sensitive sentences.

The example taken from Proverbs 6:26 touches morality. Refraining here from an extensive discussion (see Van der Louw 2007, 323–328), we will concentrate on the salient issue.

כִּי בְעֵר־אִשָּׁה זֹנֶה עֵד־כֶּכֶר לֶחֶם	Τιμὴ γὰρ πόρνης ὅση καὶ ἐνὸς ἄρτου,
וְאִשָּׁת אִישׁ נִפְשׁ יִקְרָה תְּצוּר	γυνὴ δὲ ἀνδρῶν τιμίας ψυχὰς ἀγρεύει.
For in exchange of a prostitute	For the cost of a prostitute is as little as
to a round-loaf of bread	that of just one [loaf of] bread
and a wife-of-man hunts for a	but for costly souls hunts a woman
precious soul.	of men.

In the context of a warning against adultery, this verse says that visiting a prostitute costs only a piece of bread, but adultery with a married woman is very dangerous, because her husband will take revenge. Now in the second stich the expression *אִשָּׁת אִישׁ* 'married woman' (lit. 'woman of a man') has not been rendered in an idiomatic way. Perhaps the phrase, which appears further in Leviticus 20:10 and became a fixed term in Jewish law, was unknown to the translator? I consider this unlikely. A second possibility is that the translator avoided *γυνὴ γαμετή* 'married woman' because in this context *אִשָּׁת אִישׁ* 'married woman' does not mean every married woman, but only the *adulterous* one, a problem felt by modern versions.²⁷ But he could have written (*γυνὴ*) *μοιχαλὶς* without any problem, as in 18:22; 24:55. I would rather suggest that the translator consciously reinterpreted the second stich, because the verse as a whole is permissive towards prostitution, a fact not missed by modern commentators. The stich seems to mean 'if you visit a prostitute, it will do you little damage apart from the loss of one loaf of bread, but...' It is not difficult to see why a Jewish translator would find this message disturbing.²⁸ He therefore

25 A similar picture emerges in the renderings of the synonymous verb *נִזְנַח* 'to spurn'. In the LXX-Pentateuch, God or His words are not 'spurned', but 'disobeyed', 'disregarded' etc. LXX-Isaiah follows this pattern: God and His words are the object of *οὐκ ἐθέλω* 'to desire not' (5:24) and *ἀπειθέω* 'to disobey' (30:12).

26 We find e.g. *ἀπωθέω* 'to push away' in Jeremiah 6:19; *ἀποδοκιμάζω* 'to reject' in Jeremiah 8:9; *ἐξουθενέω* 'to set at naught' in 1 Kingdoms (MT 1 Samuel) 8:7; 10:19 etc.

27 NIV '... and the adulteress preys upon your very life.' Similarly TOB and TEV.

28 Philo, e.g., denounces prostitutes and their customers in the most damning terms and claims on the basis of Deuteronomy 23:18 that Jewish law demands death penalty for prostitutes; De Iosepho 43, cf. De specialibus legibus III 51. Further De spec. leg. I 102, 104, 280. A lenient attitude towards prostitution was also found in the Roman world. Horace, Sermones I, 2, 34 quotes a saying by Cato, praising a young man who satisfied his libido in a brothel instead of ruining the good name of a married woman.

did not translate the phrase **אִשַׁת אִישׁ** as a whole, but rendered its two members separately **γυνή ἀνδρῶν** ‘woman of [many] men’, thereby turning ‘man’ into plural.

Concluding Remarks

Of course we could give further examples and include (the rarer) instances where the translator has added sections of his own, rewritten or cut passages, but this would fall outside the scope of the present article. I hope to have demonstrated that the study of the translational problems behind transformations is a step towards terminological and methodological refinement.

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