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Translation as a Factor of Social Teleonomy
La traduction comme facteur de téléonomie sociale

Sergey Tyulenev

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Article abstract

This article considers translation as a factor in the genesis of social macro-formations—ethnoses and superethnoses. The research combines Niklas Luhmann's social systems theory, Lem Gumilev's theory of ethnogenesis and the concept of teleonomy borrowed from evolutionary biologist Ernst Mayr in order to demonstrate the ethnogenetic function of translation. An ethnos is a closed loose system; it has a life cycle which is teleonomic by nature. Ethnoses evolve by passing through different stages—from inception to consummation at the acmetic phase and finally into the post-acmetic succession of phases leading to disintegration. At each of these different stages, the social system requires inputs of varying intensity from the environment. Translation as a boundary phenomenon serves as a mechanism to ensure such inputs. From the standpoint of its social function, translation is theorized in a broader sense than usual—as mediation on intrapersonal, interpersonal, interethnic and intergenerational levels.

Translation as a Factor of Social Teleonomy

Sergey Tyulenev

> *When I imagine the shape that will hover above the first half of the twenty-first century, what comes to mind is […] the pulsing red and green pixels of Mitch Resnick's slime mold simulation, moving erratically across the screen at first, then slowly coalescing into larger forms. The shape of those clusters—with their lifelike irregularity […]—is the shape that will define the coming decades. I see them on the screen, growing and dividing, and I think: That way lies the future.*
> (Steven Johnson, 2001, p. 23)

> *Science threatened to become an avalanche of "findings" which in their totality no more add up to knowledge, let alone wisdom, than a pile of bricks adds up to a cathedral. The modern system point of view is a response to this threat.*
> (Anatol Rapoport, 1968, p. xxi)

Introduction: Systems, Processes and Emergence

The mid-twentieth century was marked by a significant paradigmatic change in the sciences. Systemic integrative thinking re-emerged after centuries of the dominance of Aristotelian-Cartesian analysis. In the words of Descartes, the scientific endeavor was "to divide up [a problem] into as many parts as possible […] in order that it might be resolved in the best manner possible" (cited in Bausch, 2001, p. 1). Yet in the

mid-twentieth century, a strong opposition to this tradition arose. First, a wave of skepticism was generated in the "hard" sciences, notably in physics, by Heisenberg's uncertainty principle (according to which it is impossible to measure the properties of physical values paired with other physical values with any degree of precision, because the accuracy of measuring one detracts from the accuracy of measuring the other). Gödel's incompleteness theorems, which conclude that there is an inherent impossibility of formulating a complete set of axioms of formal mathematical systems, breached the stronghold of mathematics, which, up to that point, had been held as the epitome of strict and fully substantiated logic (Hofstadter, 1999 [1979], pp. 19 and 24).[1] Second, Von Bertalanffy's General Systems Theory attempted to capture the complexity and dynamics of natural phenomena such as self-(re)production and ever-adapting change in living organisms. It soon became clear that the emerging systemic paradigm, with its emphasis on self-organization, should be interdisciplinary. Phenomena that manifest the self-organizing ability were studied in such different scientific domains as chaos theory, the study of cellular organization and neural nets, and work in the field of artificial intelligence, to name just a few. On the one hand, the cooperation of scientists working on all these different problems was of great help to all of them (Foerster, 1962, p. vii). On the other, the systemic nature of the studied phenomena also required the input of experts in many fields. Thus, the research was carried out in the true spirit of interdisciplinarity, for in the systems studies, the focus was no longer on the way individual phenomena and separate domains existed but "on how dynamic and evolutionary processes worked" (Bausch, 2001, p. 2).

One of the central problems of the new paradigm has been the relation between systems' stability and their dynamics. Systems, like living organisms, cannot be defined by considering just one stage of their evolution. They are what they are from

1 The blow dealt by Gödel's theorems may be seen as a continuation of the process which had started earlier with the discovery of non-Euclidean geometry in the nineteenth century, which "shocked the mathematics community, because it deeply challenged the idea that mathematics studies the real world" (Hofstadter, 1999 [1979], p. 19).

their inception to their disintegration: they should be studied in their development, and their entire life cycle should be taken into account (Bonner, 1993). The systems theory, therefore, can be called "a paradigm of emergence," because "it explains how processes evolve in complex environments" (Bausch, 2001, p. 2). The subject of the present article is exactly such an evolutionary process, with a focus on translation as a factor contributing to the evolution of the social system.

My use of the notion "system" requires some explanation. Translation studies has not been an exception from the breakthrough described above: from the consideration of translations, we have moved to an examination of translation as a social phenomenon (Tyulenev, 2009b). Yet, translation can be considered either as a system in and of itself or as part of the national literary system. Such a view of translation can be traced back to the 1970s, when Itamar Even-Zohar, developing on the theories of the Russian formalists, introduced the term *polysystem theory* into translation studies (Even-Zohar, 1979, 1990). My goal here is to consider the social involvements of translation on a larger social scale. I will consider translation as an integral part of society; and it is the entire society (nation, empire) that I will view as a system. From there, translation will be theorized as a factor of the social system's evolution.

Society Is Alive and Has a Life Cycle

> *We contribute to emergent intelligence [of larger human collectivities], but it is almost impossible for us to perceive that contribution, because our lives unfold on the wrong scale.*
> (Steven Johnson, 2001, p. 100)

When considered as a system, society is studied not so much at the level of its components, but as a whole in the relational interconnection of its components (Parsons 1959 [1951], pp. vii-viii and 3-4; Buckley, 1967, pp. 42-45). Such an approach inevitably leads to the realization that society qua system is autopoietic (self-producing and reproducing) and self-steering as any living organism is. In the words of Sir Stafford Beer:

> The fact is that if a social institution is autopoietic (and many seem to answer to the proper criteria) then […] it is necessarily alive. That certainly sounds odd, but it cannot be helped. […] The social institution has identity in the biological sense; it is not just the random assemblage of interested parties that it is thought to be. (Maturana and Varela, 1980 [1972], p. 71; cf. Rapoport, 1968, pp. xx-xxi; Johnson, 2001, pp. 51-52)[2]

It seems that society also has its own life cycle.[3] The Russian historian Lev Gumilev came to this conclusion after studying the history of some forty different social formations. In his terminology, these large social formations are called *ethnoses* or, since they often embrace more than one ethnic group, *superethnoses*.[4]

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2 Cf. "As fast as societies become large and highly organized, they acquire such separation from individual efforts as to give them a character of their own" (Herbert Spencer, cited in Banathy, 2000, p. 22).

3 Despite their conscience and volition in decision-making, human beings are incapable of seeing either their contribution to the evolution of the social macro-formations they belong to, or the trajectory of such formations (unless equipped with specially gathered data). Discussing self-steering emergence of cities, Steven Johnson explains: "Human behavior works at two comparable scales: our day-to-day survival, which involves assessments of the next thirty or forty years at best; and the millennial scale of cities and other economic ecosystems. Driving a car has short-term and long-term consequences. The short term influences whether we make it to soccer practice on time; the long term alters the shape of the city itself. We interact directly with, take account of—and would seem to *control*—the former. We are woefully unaware of the latter. […Such short-term decisions which] we make consciously also contribute to a macrodevelopment that we have almost no way comprehending, despite our advanced forebrains. And that macrodevelopment belongs to the organism of the city itself, which grows and evolves and learns over a thousand-year cycle, as dozens of human generations come and go. Viewed at that speed—the millenium's time-lapse footage—our individual volition doesn't seem all that different from that of harvester ants, each of whom only lives to see a small fraction of the colony's fifteen-year existence" (2001, pp. 98-99).

4 For the present research, the difference between ethnos and superethnos is not important. That is why they are largely used

In the theory of ethnogenesis, an ethnos is defined as a closed loose system. An ethnos is closed in the sense that its contacts with its neighbours (other ethnic groups) do not significantly change its internal makeup. Ethnoses evolve in their own way (I will return to this below). *Ethnos*, therefore, is constituted as an operational closure and may be identified with the Luhmannian social autopoietic system. Autopoietic systems reproduce themselves out and by themselves. Their operations cannot be significantly influenced by the operations of other systems. Other systems' influence can only have a trigger effect on the operations of autopoietic systems. In other words, other systems can only suggest an action (to use a more precise term: irritate the system), but cannot intervene in its operations without damaging its autopoiesis.

An ethnos as a system is also loose in the sense that it is impossible to define the exact set of components that composes the system. A classic example of this type of system is a family, which may consist of a couple with or without a child or with several children. A family may be a single parent with a child (or children) or it may include grand-parents. Thus, *family* as a system is not rigid in its composition. An ethnos is also loose and can be large or small, form a political unit or be part of a multi-ethnic political unit.

Gumilev defines *ethnos* as a naturally evolved social formation with a particular behavioral stereotype. An ethnos exists as an energy system that distinguishes itself from all other similar social groups, and which is based on the principle of complementarity (Gumilev, 1993, p. 499). Importantly, Gumilev sees *ethnos* as a combination of choronomic factors (Lev Berg's term)—that is, of the influence of the geography of the ethnos' inception and development, and of a particular social-systemic organization (*ibid.*, pp. 37-40). Gumilev makes it clear that ethnoses are not to be confused with anthropological races (*ibid.*, p. 59). Such a combination of natural and social factors gives rise to

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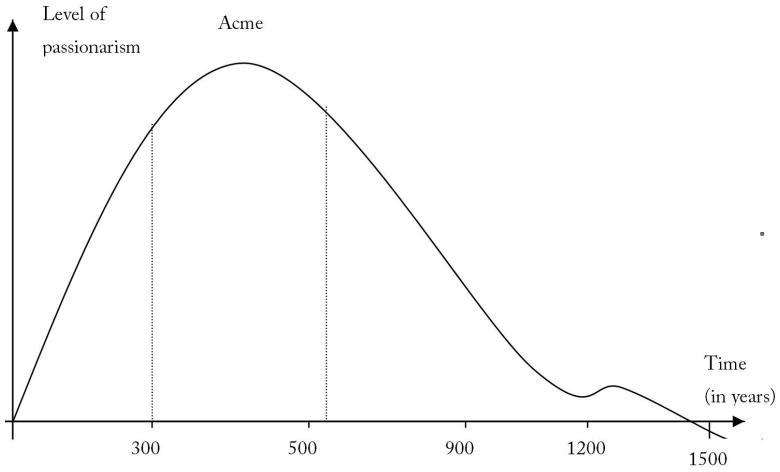
interchangeably, unless further specified. The term "superethnos" as used by Gumilev does not mean that an ethnos is superior, the prefix "super" only stating the fact that a social formation has more than one ethnos. Cf. Luhmannian "global system" (Luhmann, 1990, p. 178).

a particular behavioural stereotype which is solidified in traditions passed down from generation to generation. I would equate *ethnos* (as defined by Gumilev) with the Luhmannian system, with the caveat that the latter has a wider application—because it includes any social formation from a conversation to organizations, states and even larger social formations such as the EU, for example. As long as a social formation demonstrates the properties of an operational closure, it can, according to Luhmann's social systems theory, be regarded as a social system. But it is not necessary for us to dwell upon the difference between Gumilev's (super)ethnos and Luhmann's social system. Essentially, an ethnos may be viewed as a social system and Gumilev's theory provides us with mechanisms of description of social systems in their historical evolution and allows stepping outside the contemporary Western world which is the primary focus of Luhmann's theory (cf. *ibid.*, pp. 101-108).

According to Gumilev, the life cycle of an ethnos can be represented as a curve from the stage of its inception through the acme to the disintegration (*ibid.*, pp. 336-346). This is the trajectory of what Gumilev terms passionarism, a surge of energy that passes through all the above-said stages to its dissipation. The following graph shows the curve of ethnogenetic evolution:[5]

5 Evolution is defined as dynamics of unfolding of something/someone "from simple to the complex, through a process of successive differentiation" (Herbert Spencer, cited in Banathy, 2000, p. 21). For example, evolution as "the core process of the cosmos" is believed to consist of four phases: the energy, the material, the biological, and the cultural, thus comprising the trajectory of the known universe, seen as the arrow of time, from the formation of matter to the world of modern human society (*ibid.*, pp. 10 and 21). Concerning the evolutionary journey of human species as a whole, Bela Banathy singles out three stages: from the first appearance of humanoids on the evolutionary stage through "the human revolution" ("the revolutionary process of cultural evolution") to the threshold of the third, present-day, revolution of "conscious evolution, when it becomes our responsibility to enter into the evolutionary design space and guide the evolutionary journey of our species" (*ibid.*, p. 1).



According to Gumilev's calculations, the lifespan of an ethnos is approximately one thousand five hundred years. During this period, the ethnos passes through several stages. The rise during the first three hundred years consummates in the acme, which lasts another two–three hundred years and is followed by the break in the energy of passionarism. The phase of break (steep fall in energy level) and the somewhat stable phase of inertia take up to six hundred years in the ethnic history. The system soon loses its energy at the stages of obscuration and relict. Gumilev's original graph and the description of the stages are much more detailed, but this schematization will suffice for the present discussion (see Gumilev, 1993, p. 339 for the fully-detailed graph; also *ibid.*, 1992, pp. 19-22).

Teleonomy

Another concept which must be introduced before I can move on to the main subject of my paper is teleonomy. This is a biological concept, introduced by the evolutionary biologist Ernst Mayr. He defines a teleonomic process or behaviour as "one that owes its goal-directedness to the influence of an evolved program" (Mayr, 2007 [2004], p. 51). It is easier to understand the teleonomic process when we contrast it with the teleomatic process. The latter is a process that is achieved automatically when potential is used up—as in the cooling of a heated piece of iron, or when

an external obstacle is encountered—when, for instance, a falling stone hits the ground. Natural laws such as the law of gravity and the second law of thermodynamics govern teleomatic processes (*ibid.*, p. 50). Among examples of teleonomic processes, in contrast, one may think of more complex processes such as the migration of birds or the ontogeny of a living organism. Teleonomic processes are governed not by physical laws but by programs, such as genetic programs in the biological domain, or, in Gumilev's terms, phylogenetically evolved programs of the life cycles of social groups.

In other words, teleomatics is end-directedness. When describing it, the principal questions to be asked are the following: What happens? and how does it happen? With teleonomy there is, however, an aspect of goal-directedness, and thus the *why* question should be added: Why does it happen? (Rapoport, 1968, p. xiv). The teleonomic process or behaviour cannot be explained by basic physical laws. Teleonomic processes are the result of the operation of a particular program which is, in turn, the result of natural selection or of phylogenetic evolution. This program contains information that controls a process and a blueprint with instructions for how to use it. Teleonomic processes also have some endpoint, or "foreseen" terminus in the program. The endpoint may be a structure (in development), a physiological function, or the consummation of a behavioural act (*ibid.*, pp. 52-53). In the case of ethnogenesis, the endpoint is comparable to the life cycle of the living organism: a trajectory from birth to death. The teleonomy of an ethnos/social system is a particular contour of the development. According to Gumilev, large social systems that reach the level of an ethnos or superethnos manifest one and the same contour of development, unless their development is interrupted or forcibly distorted. We can compare this to the way in which the lives of different people develop: although there is a definite pattern of stages of the human life, there is a great deal of variation, which does not, however, alter the general principle.[6]

6 It should be emphasized that my goal in the present article is not to explain Gumilev's theory. I outline only those of its aspects which are relevant in terms of their application to translation.

Translation as an Ethnogenetic Factor

If ethnogenesis may be described as a teleonomic process, then the following question is bound to arise: What factors contribute to the evolution of an ethnos? In the following sections, I would like to focus on the role of translation as an ethnogenetic factor. There is hardly a need to prove that translation does play a role in the evolution of social systems. Therefore, I will concentrate on showing what kind of role it plays.

I have argued elsewhere that, within the social-systemic paradigm, translation may be considered as a boundary phenomenon of the social system (Tyulenev, 2009b, pp. 158-159; *ibid.*, 2011, pp. 146-157). A system is characterized by a particular way of interconnecting its elements. These relations between elements form the system's communication that sets it apart from everything else: from the system's environment. Environment and system may even share the same elements yet interconnect them differently. The relational communication of systemic elements creates a boundary encircling everything that belongs operationally to the system, and leaving everything that is operationally alien outside the circle. Over time, the system develops certain mechanisms "which increase the system's environmental sensitivity while releasing other mechanisms for internal functions" (Luhmann 1995 [1984], p. 197). Membranes, skin, movable limbs, eyes, and ears of living organisms are examples of systemic boundary phenomena. In social systems, translation is one such boundary phenomenon because it separates the system from the environment and at the same time informs the system about its environment, thereby connecting the system and the environment. Indeed, when certain phenomena are transferred, such as texts that are translated or political and cultural models that are transferred from one social group to another (see Coleman, 2009; Franklin, 2002, pp. 384-385), these phenomena (texts and models) are carried across a border. The carrying across, however, is always a kind of sifting: something is allowed into the system and something is rejected. This separating-connecting function of translation allows us to see cultural history in the following way:

> Translation involves both loss and gain. […] Translation involves mutual change. On one side, the original is changed as it is filtered through the resources, experience and perceptions of the translator. It acquires different associations, becomes part of a different structure of life and understanding. It is deformed, "misunderstood": sometimes ingeniously and creatively, sometimes perfunctorily and quite accidentally. On the other side, the translator [and with him the entire receiving system—S.T.] too is changed: his own resources, experience and perceptions are modified in the very act of translating. […] Cultural history is perpetual mistranslation. (Franklin, 2002, p. 385)

When we consider translation as a subsystem of the overall social system with its particular place and function—a boundary phenomenon of the social system, it becomes clearer why translation is a necessary factor in social-systemic evolution. Translation is a passageway for social energy and information, without which the system grows autistic and cannot go on; thus, translation is one of the mechanisms of making operationally closed systems interactionally open (Luhmann, 1995 [1984], p. 118; Foerster, 1981, pp. 2-22; Rapoport, 1968, p. xviii). To describe the teleonomic role of translation is to address the following two issues:

- What and how does translation contribute to the teleonomy of the ethnos/system?
- What are the dynamics of translation's ethnic/systemic involvements?

Translation as Social Mediator

In the previous section I showed that translation serves as a social filter when performing its function of social-systemic boundary phenomenon. There is another aspect of the social function of translation: it is a social mediator. Mediation should be distinguished from exchange. The latter is a two-element operation producing a result: A+B→C. For example, one may think of a conversation between two persons. Yet whenever there

is a disruption in the conversation due to misunderstanding, mediation is needed.

Such a situation was analyzed by Hans-Georg Gadamer. Gadamer considered the role of translation in the context of hermeneutical experience (1988 [1965], pp. 345-351). It should be noted from the very outset that he only discussed the verbal type of communication with interlingual mediation, which is a special case of communication. He viewed translation and communication involving translation as an extreme situation in which "understanding is disrupted or made difficult" (*ibid*., p. 346). Communication mediated by (interlingual) translation is considered by Gadamer to be an explicit example of implicitly mediated intralingual communication. Gadamer wrote that "for two people to be able to understand each other in conversation mastery of [a shared] language is a necessary pre-condition" (*ibid*., p. 347). However, "dependence on the translation of an interpreter is an extreme case that duplicates the hermeneutical process of the conversation: there is that between the interpreter and the other as well as that between oneself and the interpreter" (*ibid*., p. 347). In other words, it is only with translation that communication is theorized as A→M [mediation]→B=C, not when communication is an exchange (A→B=C).[7]

Building on Gadamer's hermeneutics, Jürgen Habermas goes on to equate the translator as interlingual mediator with the interpreter as one's partner in a communicative act within one and the same language:

> The role of the partner in dialogue contains in virtual form the role of the interpreter as well, that is, the role of the person who not only makes his way within a language but can also bring about understanding between languages. The role of the interpreter does not differ in principle from that of the translator. (1988 [1970], p. 145)

7 In reality both mediation and exchange unfold in both direction: A→(M)→B and A←(M←B, but here I will simplify the formula for clarity's sake.

Hence, Habermas concludes that "translation reveals a form of reflection that we perform implicitly in every linguistic communication" (1988 [1970], p. 146). In translation studies, this type of intralingual mediation was first categorized as translation by Roman Jakobson (2000 [1959], p. 114).

Habermas also theorizes translation as intergenerational mediation:

> Translation is necessary not only on a horizontal level […] but also between generations and epochs. Tradition as the medium in which languages reproduce themselves, takes place as translation, that is, as a bridging of the distances between the generations. The process of socialization through which the individual learns his language is the smallest unit in the process of tradition. (1988 [1970], p. 148)

Tradition is shown to be a filter through which a generation sifts its communication with another generation. Therefore, tradition acts as translation—that is, according to the formula: A®M®B=C.

We may see translation-like mediation even within one person. George H. Mead theorized dialogues at the intrapersonal level as the dialogues between the "I" and the "me" (Mead, 1934, pp. 173-178). The "me" part of the self "picks up the [social] norms and constraints and tells I about them" (Phillips and Metzger, 1976, p. 122). The vision of the social implanted into the individual during the process of socialization serves as a frame and a filter not only at the intergenerational level, but also at the intrapersonal level. Social psychologists showed that "a person is a complex network of selves [… and] only one version of [the individual, or only one *self*] is called forth in a given situation" (Wood, 1992, p. 144). Hence, the dialogues within the individual are actually multiplex and the only way to guarantee consistency and predictability in human behaviour is through "the anchoring attitudes that frame and filter our experience of the world" (*ibid.*, p. 144). The anchoring attitudes are "relatively stable frames of reference we use to interpret and judge objects, experiences, situations, and others" (*ibid.*, p. 144). Thus,

> the anchoring attitudes within the self act as lenses through which we interpret the world and our experiences within it. […] Communication and self interact dynamically. Each is a vital, continuous influence on the other. The self is established, sustained, and altered in communication with others. In turn, communication is constructed and interpreted through the self. (*ibid*., p. 145)

To summarize, translation as social mediation can be seen from the intrapersonal to the intergenerational level. On each of these levels translation operates to contribute to the teleonomic evolution of the ethnos. In the following sections, I would like to examine different stages of ethnic evolution in order to see the role translation plays at each one of them. Needless to say, this paper does not claim to offer anything beyond a preliminary survey.

The Inception of Ethnoses and Translation

An ethnos starts as a surge of the biochemical energy of living matter in the biosphere. The biological aspect of ethnogenesis, however, does not need to concern us here (for details see Gumilev, 1992, pp. 19-20; Gumilev, 1993, pp. 37, 319-323 and 499). The inception of new ethnoses occurs, according to Gumilev, because some persons gain extra biochemical energy which manifests itself as passionarism. Passionaries—people who possess such extra-energy—become hyperactive within their population. They want to change what surrounds them and they are capable of doing so. They organize crusades, military campaigns against other peoples, warring against their ethnoses, or the conquest of other peoples near or far away; they become great transformers, national or religious leaders; or, if they sublimate their passionarism into sciences and the arts, they become great scientists and artists. Passionaries do not necessarily need to see the results of their activity; the desire to act consumes them, even at the cost of their own lives or the lives of those whom they lead.

What types of translation, of those described in the previous section, manifest themselves at this stage of the teleonomy of an ethnos? To answer this question, we must understand the dynamics of the initial phase of ethnogenesis. Passionaries come

into conflict with the traditionally established order of their social surroundings. This makes their type of ethnos dynamic and markedly different from the persistent type of ethnos. In the dynamic ethnos, the new generation wants to be different from their parents (the problem of fathers and sons—though present in any society—becomes acute in the dynamic ethnos); the linear vision of time is prevalent over the cyclic; landscapes are changed to fit human activity and not vice versa (as in the persistent ethnos); the ethnos tries to expand its territory by conquering other peoples; religious proselytism is actively practiced; political power outweighs the authority of the elders; and foreign ideas are appropriated and implemented in order to change the society.

Everything begins with passionaries. Being a product of socialization and yet experiencing the surge of passionarism in the form of dissatisfaction with the social "establishment," passionaries go through throes of severe intrapersonal conflicts before they gather enough strength to cast off the old and initiate struggle for the new. Their anchoring attitudes eventually dissolve, but before this happens, the I and the me of their inner being goes through a period of what was described in the previous section as intense intrapersonal communication with intrapersonal translation.

After overcoming their doubts and anchoring attitudes, passionaries create a sort of "magnetic" field. Gumilev terms this a passionary field. It is charged with passionary energy which is highly contagious (pp. 497 and 276-280). The passionary field gathers other members of the population who succumb to the passionary's (passionaries') energy. As a result, consortia (e.g., religious sects, gangs) are created. These are groups that share the same, if often ephemeral and brief, historical destiny. Consortia's resistance to the surrounding social milieu is relatively low and they usually disintegrate soon after their inception, due to exogamy and the overwhelming inertia of social-historical conditions. Some of them, however, survive over several generations. If this is the case, they transform into convictia which, if they survive, become subethnoses—elements of larger ethnic structures (Gumilev, 1993, pp. 111 and 498). At the levels of the creation of passionary fields, consortia, convictia

and subethnoses, it is obvious that interpersonal communication with translation (which is predominantly intralingual) (Jakobson, 2000 [1959], p. 114) creates more instances of intrapersonal communication when passionaries cause the members of their passionary fields to question their anchoring attitudes, thereby intensifying inner dialogues of a veritable Dostoevskian-Bakhtinian/Buberian nature (see Friedman, 2005). These inner dialogues provoke intergenerational conflicts, which eventually lead to the formation of separate groups within the society. Some of these groups, in turn, will in time lead to the formation of subethnoses within ethnoses or even ethnoses and superethnoses. Thus we observe, at this stage, the intrapersonal, interpersonal intralingual and intergenerational types of translation.

Gumilev stresses that ethnoses are always created from two or more components. A combination of two or more ethnoses can sometimes lead to degeneration, but at other times can result in a new and resistant social formation. For example, combinations of Slavic, Baltic, Germanic (primarily Scandinavian), Finno-Ugrian, Iranian, Turkish tribes together with the métis of Mongol-Chinese origin came together to form the Russian superethnos (see Alekseeva, 2002, pp. 153-159; Conte, 1995; Dolukhanov, 1996; Gumilev, 1993, p. 59; Rybakov, 1984, pp. 17-33; Sedov, 1979; Tret'iakov, 1966). The creation of a new (super)ethnos is comparable to an electrical battery where the combination of the three elements—zinc, copper and acid—is necessary in order to produce electricity (*ibid*., p. 322). Intermingling of subethnic groups is usually so intense that after a certain time it is hard to trace the original ethnic groups in the resulting population, as was the case when early Slavs mixed with other ethnic groups (see Valentin Sedov's entry in Alekseeva, 2002, p. 153).

Combinations of different ethnic groups are impossible without interlingual mediation. This type of translation has so far been the primary object of interest in translation studies—to the extent that Jakobson called it "translation proper" (Jakobson, 2000 [1959], p. 114). Yet it is clear that the combinations of various subethnoses within one ethnos (such as different Slavic tribes within the Slavic ethnos) or of very different ethnoses within one

superethnos (such as Slavs, Scandinavians, Finno-Ugrians, and Turks within the Russian superethnos) involve more than just verbal transfers. Entire cultural institutions, rituals and religious systems (which act as ideological frameworks) are absorbed by one ethnos into the other (*translatio studii* and *translatio imperii* are of the same nature, (see Copeland, 1991)). For instance, in Slavic burial grounds, remains from different ethnic origins have been identified (Gumilev, 2006, p. 26). Later, the Scandinavian Varangians, which gave rise to the ruling dynasty of the Rurikovichs, brought their own Scandinavian culture on the one hand, and on the other, appropriated elements of the Slavic culture, which had, in turn, adopted different elements of the cultures of the peoples inhabiting the regions where the Slavs settled, and of the cultures of the peoples with whom they dealt in their early history (Western-Asian Turkish tribes and the Khazar empire). In such interethnic contacts of the emerging (super) ethnos, interlingual and intercultural (not only verbal) translation plays vital role. Indeed, without translation, such contacts cannot take place at all because of their intercultural nature: for instance, intraethnic developments cannot take place without intralingual or even infraverbal (pre-verbal) intrapersonal translation.

The Acme of Ethnogenesis and Translation

The acmetic phase of ethnogenesis occurs when passionarism reaches its highest point. The ethnos is still in the making. Passionarism is no longer curbed (or much less than before) by traditions; the passionarism of one person is only limited by the passionarism of another. Hence, in this stage of ethnic evolution, rivalry is very typical. Such rivalry leads to intraethnic (internecine) wars and, if it is not channeled away (as with the crusades in Western-European Christendom), it leads to bloody conflicts. As a result, the ethnogenesis slows down and prepares to pass on to the next stage—the stage when passionarism breaks down.

At the acmetic stage, interpersonal communication with the appropriate type of translation comes to the fore. Yet since new subethnic and ethnic groups join the highly dynamic (super) ethnos at this stage, inter(sub)ethnic translation is of paramount

importance. Some subethnic groups, however, interact in what may be called dialects of the same language. This is why there is very often no need for interlingual translating between subethnic formations. For example, translation was not needed between the Slavic tribes because, in the words of the author of *The Primary Chronicle* (twelfth century), "there was one Slavic people" (under the year 6406 [898 A.D.?]) and, after the Christianization of Slavic peoples, there was no need to translate sacred books "because the Slavonic language and the Russian language are one" (cited in Karpov, 1997, p. 155). This is the stage when newly emerging ethnoses are not quite differentiated, hence their languages most closely resemble what we would call dialects of the same language, and their cultures are not yet different enough to interfere with the understanding of one people by another. At the same time, the acmetic phase is decisive in the formation of a particular ethnos with its distinct culture, conventions (which will later form stable traditions and social norms) as well as stereotypes. This tends to cause a great number of intergenerational ruptures. Such disruptions become so widespread and so obvious that what Habermas called "translation between generations and epochs" must play a prominent role.

At this stage, the new ethnos ensures its place in its social-ethnic environment. Migrations are typical in this phase. The migrations may bring the new ethnos to a new ethnic surrounding, which obviously increases the role of inter(super) ethnic mediation. Yet, even if the new ethnos does not change its geographical position, it has to protect its right to occupy the place from which it either ousts the previous ethnoses or absorbs them into itself. This process calls for contacts with neighbours and, therefore, for interlingual/intercultural translation.

Translation at the Stages of Break and Inertia

The stages of break and inertia are the most stable periods of the newly formed (super)ethnos. These are the stages when the (super)ethnos is stabilized after the birth pangs of the preceding stages. The national makeup (culture, conventions, traditions, behavioural stereotypes) is solidified. Intralingual and intra(sub)ethnic translation plays the most significant role at

this point because, although there is still a considerable amount of interethnic communication, the absorption of new ethnoses or learning from the surrounding ethnoses (whose territory has been appropriated together with the knowledge of the choronomic factors—which is greatly important, sometimes even indispensable, for the survival of the new ethnos) diminishes significantly. Intralingual translation plays the role of coordinator of the ethno-cultural terminology: at this stage, regionalisms are ousted to the periphery and the common language is created (and, with the invention of print and dictionaries, codified). Naturally, there are still linguistic and ethnic minorities, but they are just that: "minorities."

At the stage of the ethnogenetic break, the dissipation of the initial (super)ethnos-forming passionarism sets in. Subpassionaries—those whose impulse of passionarism is lower than their instinct for self-preservation—outweigh passionaries (Gumilev, 1993, p. 498). This is the period of administrative stability and channeling of extra-passionarism into arts and sciences. Civil wars become possible—though not because of rivalry, but because there is no uniting passionarism that has brought the subethnoses together to form the ethnos or superethnos. Civil wars further dissipate passionarism since they occupy many of the remaining passionaries. As subethnic formations claim their rights to independent ethnic identity, the need for interlingual translation may resurface. Bilingualism and multilingualism are not uncommon, and within the superethnos translation may be used not only for genuine mediation but also in order to demonstrate the subethnic differences.

The stage of inertia is typically calm and peaceful. People are mostly law-abiding citizens. Large states (similar to unions or federations) with more or less stable political authority may be formed. Translation plays an important role because communication between different subethnic formations (linguistic/cultural minorities) is quite active.

Translation at the Stages of Obscuration and Relict

As passionary energy dissipates, egotistical and inert subpassionaries rid the society of even its industrious workers,

to say nothing of its passionaries. At the stage of obscuration, the ethnos squanders what is left from its heroic past. The stage of relict brings the ethnos to a balance with the surrounding nature (homeostasis). The calm and quiet household happiness is preferred to large-scale projects and deeds. Whatever remains of passionarism is barely enough to keep up the economy and culture developed by previous generations.

Obviously, nothing dramatic is to be expected in translation. All the forms of translation are still there. Naturally, there is mediation on the intrapersonal level: people conform their personal inner world to the anchoring tradition, which is by now well and securely established. Interpersonal communication, both intra- and interlingual, is also readily found. In modern societies, translation between epochs may even grow at this point of ethnogenesis: descendants who have lost the language and the immediacy of their ancestors' cultural heritage wish to re-establish their connection with the beginnings of their history. As a result, ancient documents and epics may be translated into the modern languages of the (super)ethnos. In ancient societies, myths and sacred texts ensured the transfer of the original cultural treasury from one generation to the next, but usually required translation nonetheless, because the ancient language differed drastically from the modern language of the ethnos. The degree of intensity of different types of translation would likely differ from ethnos to ethnos and from one historical period to another.

Concluding Remarks

In the present paper, I have attempted to consider the role of translation in the genesis and evolution of such social formations as ethnoses and superethnoses. I complemented Niklas Luhmann's social systems theory, which has already been applied to translation (see Wolf, 2009), with Lev Gumilev's theory of ethnogenesis and the concept of teleonomy elaborated by Ernst Mayr. These theories allow us to see macro-social systems as having teleonomic life cycles. This, in turn, provides us with a basis for considering the role of translation in the large-scale social evolution.

The ethnogenetic cycle comprises several stages, from the inception of the ethnos consummating in the acme and followed by a long process of disintegration. Like any self-organizing (anti-entropic) system, an ethnos requires inputs of necessary components from its environment. Translation is a boundary phenomenon of the social system and therefore plays a key role in ethnogenesis. Translation is a mechanism ensuring the necessary inputs from the environment into the system, and is of vital importance at the initial stages of the ethnogenetic cycle because every ethnos emerges as a combination of several infra-ethnic social structures. Their interaction as well as their borrowing of components necessary for their integration into a new ethnos is ensured by translation. In the later stages of ethnogenesis, translation is still present, but its role is limited to ensuring a limited interaction of the established ethnos struggling to keep its identity. Arguably, translation is ever-present in society, yet at different stages of society's evolution, different types of translation are employed to ensure the necessary types of social communication.

My range of examples of the ethnogenetic involvement of translation was limited to only two ethnoses—Kievan Rus' and Muscovy Rus'. The choice of these two was natural because I have personally studied both of them. However, for my conclusions to be verified and fine-tuned, more theoretical and case studies are required.

Also, other conceptions of social evolution must be explored with regard to the role they assign to translation. For example, in Herbert Spencer's sociological view, the idea of societal progress is emphasized: society moves from indefinite homogeneity towards definite heterogeneity, coherence, multiformity, and complexity (summarized in Banathy, 2000, pp. 21-23; cf. Renn, 2006). What would be the contribution of translation to social processes viewed from this angle? The role of translation can be studied in the context of theories of the emergence of "group society" (Csányi) and global systems (Banathy, 2000, pp. 31-32; Csányi, 1989, p. 180 and 187-189; Luhmann, 1990, p. 178; Tyulenev, 2009a, pp. 246-269). Translation can also be considered with the help of the conceptual

apparatus of the relatively newly introduced sociocybernetics (see Geyer and Zouwen, 1992).

In the present preliminary research, I have focused on the input which translation provides for the system from the environment. A more complete description of the dynamics of translation's involvement in ethnogenesis should also include the system's output passing through translation. There is a throughput between system and environment, and translation as a boundary phenomenon plays a crucial role in ensuring this throughput (Luhmann, 1995, p. 201; Tyulenev, 2011, pp. 184-193).

Within present-day translation studies, the categorization of intrapersonal and intergenerational mediation as types of translation is relegated to the domain of metaphors. Indeed, intrapersonal processes, whether they are being discussed on the psychological level or in terms of their social relevance, fall outside the sphere of immediate interest and expertise of translation students. Intergenerational processes are seen as pertaining to the sociological domain. This scenario is reminiscent of the early days of semiotics. When considering language structurally, Ferdinand de Saussure predicted that language would be viewed as a special case of signs and in so doing laid the foundation for semiotics—which indeed considers language as one of many types of semiosis. Today, for example, communication between ants is viewed as the ant "language" with its "vocabulary" consisting of "semiochemicals" (Johnson, 2001, p. 75-76). In translation studies, an artificial wall has been maintained between different types of transfer, despite attempts to elaborate a new theory that would combine all of them (see Jakobson, 2000 [1959], p. 114; Even-Zohar, 1990, pp. 73-74; Lambert, 2006 [1997]; Göpferich, 2004; D'hulst, 2008). If our main concern is the integrity of translation studies as a scholarly discipline with its distinct subject matter, then once again, we can refer to the example of linguistics and recall that semiotics did not, in fact, annihilate linguistics.

The present paper does not claim to be more than a preliminary sketch. To my knowledge, there has been no research up to this point in translation studies of the role of translation in social evolution. But in order to take a further step towards clarifying the social role of translation, a macroscopic view of

ethnogenesis including translation is absolutely indispensable. It would seem that there is a certain identifiable dynamic of translation's involvement in ethnogenesis. Since Gumilev studied forty ethnoses in order to draw his conclusions about ethnogenesis, many ethnogenetic cycles must be analyzed in light of the role translation played at different stages of their unfolding before any general principles can be formulated.

I would like to conclude by returning where I started—with the systems theory as an inter-/transdisciplinary endeavour. Perhaps translation theory will be able to join the circle of scientific fields making contributions to the study of systemic complexity. There is little doubt that society is a complex system and that translation is one of the vital mechanisms ensuring the connectivity of various parts of the society qua system. Translation helps connect parts of society within the society as well as across its borders (both temporally and spatially). Translation is an important factor of change for the social system because it contributes to the information-cum-energy exchange within the system, which guides society through created asymmetries to the establishment of new balances. Such a vision of translation may lead to a new appreciation of it as a social phenomenon, and may also contribute to the general theory of evolution. In Ervin Laszlo's words:

> The exploration of the paradigm and the creation, criticism and elaboration of progressively more refined general theories is a challenge awaiting the contemporary community of natural, human and social scientists. It is a challenge well worth accepting. The elaboration of a sound general evolutionary theory will surely rank among the greatest achievements of human intellectual history. (cited in Banathy, 2000, p. 47)

University of the Free State

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ABSTRACT: Translation as a Factor of Social Teleonomy — This article considers translation as a factor in the genesis of social macro-formations—ethnoses and superethnoses. The research combines Niklas Luhmann's social systems theory, Lem Gumilev's theory of ethnogenesis and the concept of teleonomy borrowed from evolutionary biologist Ernst Mayr in order to demonstrate the ethnogenetic function of translation. An ethnos is a closed loose system; it has a life cycle which is teleonomic by nature. Ethnoses evolve by passing through different stages—from inception to consummation at the acmetic phase and finally into the post-acmetic succession of phases leading to disintegration. At each of these different stages, the social system requires inputs of varying intensity from the environment. Translation as a boundary phenomenon serves as a mechanism to ensure such inputs. From the standpoint of its social function, translation is theorized in a broader sense than usual—as mediation on intrapersonal, interpersonal, interethnic and intergenerational levels.

RÉSUMÉ : La traduction comme facteur de téléonomie sociale — L'article considère la traduction comme un facteur dans la formation des grands ensembles sociaux, soit les *ethnos* et les *superethnos*. Pour démontrer cette fonction ethnogénétique de la traduction, l'article fait appel à la théorie des systèmes sociaux de Niklas Luhmann, à l'ethnogenèse de Lev Gumilev et au concept de téléonomie emprunté au biologiste évolutionniste Ernst Mayr. Un *ethnos* est un système souple fermé qui présente un cycle de vie de nature téléonomique. Ces ensembles évoluent en passant par différentes phases : la naissance du système, la phase acméique

(caractérisée par la consommation) et enfin une succession des phases postacméiques qui mènent à la désintégration du système. Au cours de chacune de ces phases, le système social demande un apport, d'amplitude variable, de son environnement. La traduction, en tant que phénomène-frontière, agit comme un mécanisme permettant l'introduction de ces influx dans le système. Donc, si on la considère par rapport à sa fonction sociale, la traduction est théorisée dans une perspective plus large. Elle devient un facteur médiateur sur les plans intrapersonnel, interpersonnel, interethnique et intergénérationnel.

Keywords: sociology, translation, teleonomy, social systems theory, ethnogenesis, Luhmann, Gumilev

Mots-clés : sociologie, traduction, téléonomie, théorie des systèmes sociaux, ethnogenèse, Luhmann, Gumilev

Sergey Tyulenev
205 Nelson Mandela Dr.
Department of Language Management and Language Practice
University of the Free State
Bloemfontein
South Africa, 9301
sergeytlnv@gmail.com