



**TRANSLATION:
A FAMILY OF “MOVES” IN DISTINCT LANGUAGE-GAMES**

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ABSTRACT: The interest on the work of Wittgenstein in Translation Studies (TS) has grown significantly in recent years, with contributions by eminent scholars (e.g., TYMOCZKO, 2014 [2007]) and even an explicitly Wittgensteinian approach (WILSON, 2016). Tymoczko assumes a “post-positivist” stance akin to cognitive sciences, recurring to Wittgenstein’s ‘family resemblances’ — understood as ‘cluster concepts’.² This echoes a pioneering use of Wittgensteinian concepts in TS (TOURY, 1980), yet the discussion still needs to be deepened. Resuming and deepening the discussion of some topics, I sustain also here that ‘conception of language’ comes logically before any ‘theory of translation’ one can set up, the former being thus a ‘condition of possibility’ for the latter. My approach is indebted to Arley Moreno’s *Epistemology of Usage*, in the understanding that the ‘grammar’ of concepts has a ‘transcendental function’, even though the ‘description of use/usage’ can only happen after the deed, or *a parte post*, in the sense of French epistemologist G.-G. Granger. Under this perspective, Toury’s proximity to Wittgenstein is much greater than *prima facie*, what might be helpful in the dialogue from TS with philosophy.

KEYWORDS: Ludwig Wittgenstein; Conception of language; Condition of possibility; Family resemblances; Translation theory.

RESUMO: O interesse na obra de Wittgenstein nos estudos da tradução cresceu significativamente nos últimos anos, com contribuições de eminentes pesquisadores (como TYMOCZKO, 2014 [2007]) e até mesmo uma abordagem explicitamente wittgensteiniana (WILSON, 2016). A abordagem “pós-positivista” de Tymoczko alinha-se com as ciências cognitivas e recorre às ‘semelhanças de família’ de Wittgenstein — compreendidas como ‘*cluster concepts*’. Tal visada faz eco a um uso pioneiro desse aporte wittgensteiniano nos estudos da tradução (TOURY, 1980), mas a discussão ainda demanda maior aprofundamento. Retomando e aprofundando a discussão de alguns tópicos, sustento também aqui que ‘concepção de linguagem’ é logicamente anterior a qualquer ‘teoria da tradução’ que possamos formular, sendo a primeira, portanto, uma condição de possibilidade para a segunda. Minha abordagem dialoga com a *Epistemologia do uso* de Arley Moreno, alinhando-se com o entendimento de que a ‘gramática’ dos conceitos tem uma ‘função transcendental’, ainda que a ‘descrição do uso’ só possa ser feita após o ato, ou *a parte post*, no sentido do epistemólogo francês G.-G. Granger. Sob essa perspectiva, a afinidade de Toury com Wittgenstein é maior do que *prima facie*, o que pode facilitar o diálogo dos estudos da tradução com a filosofia.

KEYWORDS: Ludwig Wittgenstein; concepção de linguagem; condição de possibilidade; semelhanças de família; teoria da tradução.

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² Double quotes delimit verbatim quotations, single quotes mark concepts and quotations within quotations.

In philosophy, ‘translation’ is usually discussed in two distinct and often disconnected ways. The most common is using ‘translation’ as a rhetorical tool in the dispute over the interpretation considered most adequate, or even the only possible or ‘correct’ one. This scenario is akin to a common debate about literary translations and to what happens in translation criticism, when one talks about the need for new and/or better translations. In such cases, there is a strong tendency to elevate the own interpretation to a criterion of adequacy/correctness, i.e., to use it as *tertium comparationes* between the source text — the so-called ‘original’ — and its translation. The other approach involves the (im)possibility of ‘translation’ in disputes about the (in)commensurability of different languages, usually at the level of the linguistic system and often assuming homogeneity in given cultural communities. The ‘irrationality of tongues’ German romantics talk about, and Davidson’s ‘radical interpretation’ (based on ‘charity’) as opposed to Quine’s ‘radical translation’ would be some examples.

Yet, philosophers rather seldomly develop a systematic ‘translation theory’ that should account for what happens when one translates, what parameters come into play, how empiric factors direct or constrain the way one translates, and so forth — which is one of the main objects of Translation Studies (TS) since constituted as an autonomous academic area in the 1970-80s. In this strongly interdisciplinary field, philosophical premises often serve as foundation for theories of translation, notably to question traditional assumptions about the stability of meaning and the viability of a concept of ‘equivalence’ based on idealizations such as ‘neutrality’ and ‘objectivity’ (understood in an essentialist/positivist way). This general picture also applies to the case of Wittgenstein. In recent years, there’s an increasing interest in discussing how his philosophy could contribute to the current debate in TS, alongside the already substantial influence of Hermeneutics and Deconstruction — to name only the most common affiliations. Such interest derives almost exclusively from readings of *Philosophical Investigations* (PI), and this alone is reason enough to look at what happens in TS when talking about the contemporary repercussions of the book, 70 years after its first publication. Wittgenstein himself didn’t develop any ‘theory of translation’ (nor any ‘theory’ at all, in his later work), but one can extract such a theory *a parte post* from the ‘conception of language’ that sustains his mature philosophy, which is different from the one in the early work (OLIVEIRA, 2007; 2012).

A necessary premise for a consistent Wittgensteinian approach in TS is the recognition that ‘conception of language’ is a condition of possibility for ‘translation theory’. In other

words: our understanding of the functionings of language conditions the way we describe and try to explain the very concept of translation. In a compendium about *Translation and Philosophy*, Alice Leal evokes this logical conditioning drawing on the seminal work of George Steiner, for whom “a ‘mature’ theory of translation would ‘presum[e] a systematic theory of language (...), [b]ut the fact remains that we have no such theory of language’ (STEINER, 1998, 294)” (LEAL, 2019, 225). What Steiner calls a “systematic theory of language” can be subsumed under the idea of a ‘conception of language’ that is necessarily at work even if one doesn’t make it explicit, and even though a considerable number of translation theories doesn’t keep the coherence between what is said about translation and what is assumed about language functioning. I here address this topic based on Wittgensteinian concepts that have found resonance in the ongoing debate in TS, but still demand a more in-depth understanding of their philosophical implications for a proper use.

1. Family resemblances and translation

Aside ‘language-game’, the most used idea of Wittgenstein’s in TS is ‘family resemblances’ as what organizes concepts in natural languages — in opposition to the traditional thinking of a putative essence that constitutes the core of a given concept, to be defined in exact terms and mostly understood as not subject to change due to place and time.

Maria Tymoczko’s (2014 [2007]) use of Wittgenstein’s ‘family resemblances’ to set up her idea of ‘*translation’ as a ‘cluster concept’ is arguably the most systematic discussion of the topic in recent TS. Her main argument is that ‘translation’ is not a concept used in a homogeneous way, there being significant differences among its use in Western discourse and in other traditions. To ‘empower translators’ in a field under a strong process of internationalization, one should then ‘enlarge the concept’, so that the same label could account for such different uses, also under other labels across cultures. Yves Gambier (2018) too makes a systematic review of the concept, drawing among others on Tymoczko’s notion of ‘*translation’ and aggregating a historical dimension to the debate. Notice that although Tymoczko aims at the ‘enlargement of translation’, she doesn’t dismiss the need of a clear-cut ‘definition’, and this is where ‘cluster concept’ comes into play (OLIVEIRA, 2022). This approximation is certainly productive and brings us further in the discussion. Nevertheless, it also entails some shortcomings, especially in regards the ideas that a ‘concept without exact borders’ would be rather the exception than the rule, and that philosophy shall work the same way as science.

At the beginnings of the ‘cultural turn’ that came along with TS as an autonomous, institutionalized academic area starting in the 1970s, Gideon Toury practically cloned a passage from *Philosophical Investigations* to characterize the concept of ‘translation’, just substituting the word ‘number’ with ‘translation’.

[...] — And I shall say: ‘games’ form a family. And likewise the kinds of number [translation], for example, form a family. Why do we call something a “number” [“translation”]? Well, perhaps because it has a — direct — affinity with several things that have hitherto been called “number” [“translation”]; and this can be said to give it an indirect affinity with other things that we also call “numbers” [“translations”]. And we extend our concept of number [translation], as in spinning a thread we twist fibre on fibre. And the strength of the thread resides not in the fact that some one fibre runs through its whole length, but in the overlapping of many fibres. (WITTGENSTEIN, 2009, 36e [PI, § 67]; TOURY 1980, 18 [1979]; quotation marks as in the original)³

Notice the dynamic character of Wittgenstein’s figure, as “we extend our concept” based on already existing ones, by similarity: “affinity with several things that have hitherto been called ‘number’ [TOURY, 1979/1980: ‘translation’]”. Another important element for the discussion of family resemblances is the intrinsic vagueness of concepts, in opposition to the idea that a useful concept has necessarily to be precise — a demand with a large tradition (BENN-YUMI, 2017) that assumes a radical twist in Frege’s approach (PI, § 71; BIESENBACH, 2011, 130-131 [FREGE, GGA II 56]). The opposition here would thus be ‘similarity’ vs. ‘definition’ — yet now in a complementary, not mutually exclusive way, meaning that neither definition nor similarity alone is enough: similarity alone might be perceived before a concept is instituted and can then be used in language-games, yet defining a concept is no guarantee that it’s limits will remain fixed. They change with time, as Wittgenstein himself recalls in a famous passage:

there are countless different kinds of use of all the things we call “signs”, “words”, “sentences”: new types of language, new language-games, as we may say, come into existence, and other become obsolete and get forgotten. (We can have a *rough picture* of this from the changes in mathematics). (WITTGENSTEIN, 2009, 14-15e [PI, § 23])

Most reviews of ‘family resemblances’ stay by the concept of ‘game’, probably due to the eminent centrality of ‘language-games’. However, this tendency also reinforces the idea that only a small group of concepts work per family resemblances, having vagueness as a constitutive feature. Yet this is not the case:

The use we make from the word “concept” can be perceived, according to Wittgenstein, in different language-games, and its meaning corresponds to this diversity of applications. Says Wittgenstein: “‘concept’ is a vague concept” [BGM, §

³ A standard procedure in the specialized literature is to make references to Wittgenstein’s work using acronyms and section number, when available — which helps to find them exactly also in different editions, even across languages. Whenever possible, I adopt this procedure here, in a complementary way to the standards of this publication. My interpolations come in square brackets; *emphasis* is marked as mine if added to the original texts.

50], that is, we use this same word to qualify, for example, the notion of number as well as of game — or better, notions with a high degree of exactness as well as those whose vagueness is recognized at once. It's precisely this multiplicity of applications of the word "concept" what Wittgenstein considers to be the meaning (*Bedeutung*) of the concept of concept. (MORENO, 1993, 31-32)⁴

In PI §§ 531-532, for instance, Wittgenstein talks about two senses of 'understanding', the first one being when we can express the same thought differently and the second when we perceive the 'uniqueness' of something — as when we understand a poem or a musical phrase. He then asks if this would amount to "two different meanings", to conclude: "I would rather say that these kinds of use of 'understanding' make up its meaning, make up my *concept* of understanding. [/] For I *want* to apply the word 'understanding' to all this" (2009, 152e [PI, § 532]).

Now, if 'concept' itself is a "vague concept" (BGM, § 50), and if we use the same concept with different senses, then 'exactness' cannot be a prerequisite to being a 'concept' *tout court* but derives instead from the language-game at play, which might demand a greater or minor degree of precision. "— Thought you still own me a definition of exactness", says Wittgenstein (2009, 37e [PI, § 69]).

This paper is an exercise in thinking *rigorously* along these lines, aiming at a general concept of 'translation' that does justice to the variety of language-games it comes into play, considering that "the thread[s] we twist fibre on fibre" (PI, § 67, quoted above) are the 'intermediate links' that allow us to apply the same concept to a multitude of language-games, without falling into the pitfall of demanding an all-encompassing 'exact' definition to cover any possible case:

A main source of our failure to understand is that we don't have *an overview* of the use of our words. — Our grammar is deficient in surveyability. A surveyable representation produces precisely that kind of understanding which consists in 'seeing connections'. Hence the importance of finding and inventing *intermediate links*. (WITTGENSTEIN, 2009, 54e [PI, § 122])

To be consistent with Wittgenstein's ideas of 'family resemblances' (which are perceived by 'seeing connections', through the "finding and inventing *intermediate links*"), one must abandon the received opinion that equates 'rigour' with 'exactness'. In the preface to *Philosophical Investigations*, the author states that his "thoughts soon grew feeble if [he] tried to force them along a single track against their natural inclination. — And this was, of course, connected with the very nature of the investigation" (WITTGENSTEIN, 2009, 3e). Many commentators see in this remark a confession of failure (of the project of writing a book in a straightforward form, which is partially true), but disregard the important complement that its

⁴ All translations without register of source in the references are mine.

structuring in form of an “album” is, “of course, connected with the very nature of the investigation” — what is a sign of strength, not of weakness! Similarly, some degree of vagueness is also connected with the very nature of the concepts at play in our discussion. Hence, ‘rigour’ must here entail some degree of ‘vagueness’, and ‘exactitude’ can only be achieved within the strict limits of well-circumscribed language-games. What is at stake is thus adopting a ‘conception of language’ compatible with Wittgenstein’s later work and its further developments by other thinkers, or even with compatible stances that might approach the topic from other angles but come to similar conclusions.

To this understanding belongs primarily the insight that ‘conception of language’ lies deeper than ‘language-game’: one cannot change it at pleasure, just as one changes clothes according to the occasion — it’s ‘grammatical’. In other words: conception of language is the *Ur-* condition of possibility for any theory involving language, not only translation. And if we agree that thinking involves language, then conception of language is also an *Ur-* condition of possibility for a proper understanding of human thinking at all.

Would this be a consensus, or is the matter not settled? And should the matter not be settled, now or in a putative future, what kind of instance(s) would be compatible with Wittgenstein’s later work? Can we go on with the discussion without assuming a specific stance about this matter? Wouldn’t such a stance be implicit in our reasonings, even if it might not be made explicit?

In Western philosophy, at least since the German Romantics, with Herder, Wilhelm von Humboldt, and Schleiermacher, among others, and later with the ‘linguistic turn’ associated with Wittgenstein, it seems that a stance that dissociates thinking from language is not tenable anymore, despite the efforts of approaches that stay tied to strict empiricism or use other strategies to set these domains apart. In linguistics, the topic is most clear in the work of Sapir and Whorf, based on their studies of Amerindian languages. In his book *Philosophie der Grammatik*, Wilhelm Köller discusses the matter under the aegis of historical linguistics and poses that, regarding both Humboldt’s hypothesis about how worldview is structured by language and [Sapir-] Whorf’s thesis of linguistic relativity, it is valid to conclude “that there can be disagreement about the degree of this determining force [of grammar/language] and about the possibility of its explicit control, but not about its existence” (KÖLLER, 1988, 38).

Anticipating the recurrence of an already heard charge of ‘dogmatism’, posed against a philosophical thesis that sees an inextricable connection between language and thought, and that states that conception of language is a condition of possibility to any further theorizing

involving both instances, a prophylactic note here might be helpful. Remember that such a ‘post-therapeutical’ conception of language informed by the later Wittgenstein derives from a ‘grammatical’ description of the real, actual use(s) of language, without ‘trying to impose properties from the model to the facts’ — which was the attitude that the philosopher himself described as being ‘dogmatic’ and is expressed in the contrast of the dogmatism of logic’s “requirement” in *Tractatus* with the antidogmatic valuing of “actual language” in *Philosophical Investigations* (WITTGENSTEIN, 2009, 51e [PI, § 107]).⁵ Thus, it would be an oxymoron to call ‘dogmatic’ such a stance based on real usage. That would be akin to what happens in the liar’s paradox, or in the attitude of tolerating the intolerant. The charge cancels itself. What is at stake is ultimately the recognition that at some point we hit the bedrock, where ‘reasons’ cease and we only can say: “This is simply what I do” (WITTGENSTEIN, 2009, 91e [PI, § 217]). ‘Conception of language’ is such a case: one cannot dig any deeper, as regards thinking about ‘language’. That’s also the reason practice amounts to a ‘foundation without foundation’, as in the hint to Goethe’s *Faust* in *On Certainty*: “In the beginning was the deed” (WITTGENSTEIN, 2004, 51e [OC, § 402]) — in a passage Faust wants to... translate!

As to Toury’s seminal use of Wittgenstein’s insights in TS, notice that the Israeli scholar talks about “A Semiotic Approach” to translation (TOURY, 1980), a stance that has somewhat gone lost in most mainstream discussions in current TS but is central to my argument. Here, again, we can recur to Arley Moreno:

One of the battles fought by conceptual therapy is against the essentialist thinking that runs dogmatically over the diversity of linguistic practices by imposing just one unilateral “diet” for meaning. The foundation is then established outside language and linguistic practice, in metaphysical universes of the most varied forms — realist, idealist, empiricist, formalist, and modern versions such as mentalist, behaviourist, cognitivist, etc. — all of which share the idea of establishing the foundation of meaning outside the practice of language.

Turning our attention back to the soil of this practice stands for, truthfully speaking, replacing the traditional conception of absolute foundation with the idea of conditions of possibility — relative and internal to linguistic practice. (MORENO, forthcoming)

Scholars who work at the interface of TS to Peircean semiotics build a notable exception to the mainstream referred above and set up a bridge to the idea of ‘foundation’. Umberto Stecconi, for instance, states that “difference, similarity, and mediation” are at the foundation of translation, also posing that “the notion of similarity [is] intractable in its vagueness; yet the character is fecund, and productive precisely because of this” (STECCONI, 2004, 8-9). Such intractableness is certainly a hurdle for approaching translation under the sign of science,

⁵ It’s no coincidence that the talk of “a family of structures” comes next (PI, § 108), together with a plea to rethink ‘rigour’.

especially regards traditional notions as ‘objectivity’, ‘neutrality’ and ‘exactness’ — not to forget ‘equivalence’ understood in such terms.

Furthermore, although some see philosophy as akin to science, one should remember Wittgenstein held very emphatic views about their differences (PI §109), hence any such approximation based on his later work demands especial care. One aspect of the somewhat one-sided reception of Toury’s work is understanding ‘description’ as being necessarily about the ‘empirical’, disregarding the transcendental function the ‘description of the use(s)’ plays in Wittgenstein’s mature philosophy (OLIVEIRA, 2019a, 579-582). French epistemologist Gilles Gaston Granger poses that, in opposition to the ‘structure’ in scientific research about empirical matters, the ‘style’ in the humanities is *a parte post*: concepts organize experience *a priori*, yet their premises (‘grammar’) can only be described after the deed — their ‘use’, in Moreno’s terms. So, *a parte post* isn’t the same as *a posteriori*. This is a main difference between the ‘transcendental function’ that runs within Wittgenstein’s concept of ‘grammar’ and Kant’s ‘transcendental subject’ *a priori* (MORENO, 2012). Toury’s ‘norms’ fit perfectly into Wittgenstein’s idea of conceptual ‘grammar’, and this kinship allows for a fruitful dialogue of TS with philosophy.

Circa two decades ago, a Max-Plank-Institut researcher — winner of a so-called alternative Nobel Prize — used a figure I’ve kept in mind since then. It says contemporary science entails two basic career profiles: ‘generalists’ try to cover a large field of knowledge but usually don’t go very deep in their findings; ‘specialists’ go very deep in restricted domains but have difficulties in making their findings productive in other areas. Both profiles are important, but the most productive knowledge mobilizes a ‘T-thinking’ that goes deep in one field and yet also spreads its radius wide enough to be noticed in neighbouring areas, thus planting seeds that lead to new insights also outside the original field — or, conversely, go deeper at certain points where new ideas have entered these neighbouring areas.

2. T-thinking

Some scholars have already done a great work in bringing Wittgenstein’s ideas to TS and stablishing bridges to questions considered important in the area: the ‘horizontal’ dimension of T-thinking. When addressing the topic ‘translation’ in a dialogue with philosophers, my task has usually been to hint at the bare existence of TS and then reinforce its relevance, thus mounting a horizontal rafter to link both disciplinary areas (OLIVEIRA, 2007; 2012; 2019b). Here, my contribution is to suggest that we also need to plant a ‘vertical’

dimension of specialized philosophical thinking in TS, exploring at greater depth notions tied to ‘family resemblance’ and ‘vagueness’, thus adopting a ‘conception of language’ informed by the conceptual therapy in the sense of Wittgenstein to set up a ‘post-therapeutic’ theory of translation.

The horizontal dimension: two rafters (with deepening moves inside TS)

Our main case is Tymoczko’s understanding of ‘*translation’ as a ‘cluster concept’, which was criticized for mobilizing ‘language’ and ‘game’ as separate, autonomous instances in an early version ([Meta 50:4, 1082–97, 2005] GÁRCIA-LANDA, 2006), thus bypassing the fact that Wittgenstein promotes a radical shift in both ideas when putting them together to dissolve age-old essentialism. In the 2014 [2007] book, Tymoczko doesn’t separate ‘game’ and ‘language’ anymore, but her assimilation from ‘family resemblances’ to ‘cluster concepts’ as understood in cognitive sciences still is a problem, if we want to talk philosophically about translation.

Tymoczko recognizes that ‘cluster concepts’ aren’t the same as ‘family resemblances’ (2014, 90-100), but she doesn’t value the differences as much as I do. The reasons for this are clear, as she aims at the approaches considered most productive in different cultures (and/or discourse communities), while my purpose is to emphasize the intrinsic relation between ‘conception of language’ and ‘theory of translation’ — the first being a condition of possibility for the latter. As Wittgenstein would say, different ‘objects of comparison’ lead to seeing different ‘aspects’. Despite such differences, I consider Tymoczko’s concept of ‘*translation’ for a field in a strong process of internationalization a brilliant move, to be pushed forward with some added qualifications, and encompassing the ‘metaphorical uses’ and applications in neighbouring disciplines Yves Gambier (2018) excludes from his discussion. We can start by looking at how Tymoczko deals with

Tourey’s definition of a translation as “any target language text which is presented or regarded as such within the target system itself, on whatever grounds” (TOURY, 1982, 27; cf. 1980, 14, 37, 43–45), [which would be] consistent with an understanding of translation as a cluster concept. (TYMOCZKO, 2014, 101).

In the further discussion, she remarks:

It may on occasion be advantageous or necessary to define translation narrowly [...]. Nonetheless, any such narrowed definitions must be formulated with the awareness that a controlled and limited definition is only useful for the particular purposes for which it is created. (102-3)

At closer inspection, there's large agreement of Tymoczko's with Toury's vague and broad "definition", so we need only to add that 'definition' does *not* exhaust the whole extension of a given concept, which is also dependent on its 'applications':

The description of usage shows that [...] meaning ([*la signification*] *Bedeutung*) is not reduced to the *a priori* definition of sense [*le sens*] but concerns the set of its applications. [...] The definition of a rule of sense does not always allow anticipating, through pure thought, all cases of its application, nor does it prohibit applications that come to express different criteria. Thus, in the analytic relationship, the thought of sense is expressed in its application, and not *in vitro*, given that sense is not independent of the application we make of it — the same way, moreover, as in the *a priori* synthetic relation of sense (MORENO, 2012, 64)

Moreno's distinction of 'sense' as application (*Anwendung/Verwendung*) and 'meaning' (*Gebrauch*) as usage derives from his close readings of Wittgenstein's (as in a posthumously to appear analytical *Commentary to Philosophical Investigations, Part I*). The Austrian philosopher also understood Frege's *Bedeutung* would amount to different applications of *Sinn* in language practice (whose sum in usage Moreno terms 'meaning' [*la signification*]), yet this feature hasn't received much attention in mainstream interpretations. Hans Biesenbach transcribes:

— Und man kann sagen der Satz habe einen anderen *Sinn* wenn er ein anderes Bild macht. Und wenn ich mir erlauben darf Freges Grundgedanken in seiner Theorie von Sinn & Bedeutung zu erraten so würde ich nun fortfahren: die Bedeutung des Satzes, im Sinne Freges, sei seine Verwendung /Anwendung/ [213, 267v (hs)] (emphasis and /variation/ as in the original; punctuation and spelling as in Wittgenstein's manuscripts, following BIESENBACH, 2011, 111)

Tymoczko's comment on the eventual pertinence of defining 'translation' narrowly (2014, 102) is akin to the discussion of 'understanding' in PI §§ 531-532 evoked above. As registered elsewhere, Hans-Johann Glock poses in his *Wittgenstein dictionary* that the two cases in PI § 531 "express different criteria, which we could label as *sameness* vs. *uniqueness*". So, "the first case would imply translatability" in the traditional sense of 'equivalence', "the second untranslatability [...]. But we do translate poems, puns etc., despite their uniqueness [...]" (OLIVEIRA, 2020, 41). Talking of "(un)translatability" in line with Glock's distinction might thus be productive in a specific language-game (e.g., comparing language systems, at the level of structure — Saussure's *langue*), yet this excludes from the idea of 'translation' the results of many actual translations in the real world (deed). Hence, one should be careful not to take such restricted use of 'translation' as a 'general definition' — what would then amount to 'thinking' instead of 'looking', in the sense of PI § 66. Drawing such a boundary might indeed make sense for a particular purpose (PI, §§ 68-69), but the resulting definition cannot cover all cases of 'translation'. If something new has been accepted as a 'translation' in a given community, it then changes the earlier scope of the concept: it's another fibre in the thread, in Wittgenstein's

figure, even if different criteria come into play (Moreno). Empirical ‘acceptance’ leads to changes in normative ‘acceptability’ (OLIVEIRA and AZIZE, 2021, 196, n. 16; TOURY, 2012, 203).

Tymoczko’ (2014) review about the various senses of ‘translation’ bridges different approaches and cultures, making a deepening move that amounts to T-thinking within TS, in a dialogue with neighbouring areas in the ongoing discussion. Philip Wilson (2016) too assessed the productivity of ‘family resemblances’ to tackle specific topics in translational practice, among other Wittgensteinian concepts from the later philosophy, in an overview we can also call T-Thinking, as it brings the highlighted concepts to the practice or reflexion involving specific types of translation — the points where one goes deeper in thinking. Before this backdrop, I can now focus on a specific aspect Wilson, Tymoczko and other TS scholars have omitted, or at least not emphasized, i.e., the importance of maintaining Wittgenstein’s later conception of language when using his concepts to tackle translational questions — or, alternatively, mobilizing a conception of language (and meaning) that is compatible with his in main aspects (OLIVEIRA, 2019a, 585-90; 2020).

The Gretchen question is how much compatibility must be given to enable and legitimate the use of the concepts and findings from one perspective within the frame of reference of others. In science, one tries to build a ‘general paradigm’, although there are competing ones. This might explain some moves by Tymoczko and Wilson, among others. However, such a search for compatibility seems more difficult in philosophy — if we want to take seriously Wittgenstein’s warning not to confuse philosophy with science (PI, § 109), and acknowledging that philosophy deals with ‘the same questions’, albeit from different perspectives.

The vertical dimension: deepening after a philosophical insight (vagueness before exactitude)

We may now address a couple of points where my approach leads to different results than those already achieved in TS. Tymoczko doesn’t mention Wittgenstein in her general review of philosophical contributions in her 2014 book (Chapters 1.3 and 1.7), probably because Wittgenstein didn’t address ‘translation’ in any systematic way. When mentioning “conception of language” (106, 132), the sources Tymoczko refers to are also other scholars (e.g., Davis, Fairclough, Anderson), who mobilize this concept within other frames of reference. Yet the way Wittgenstein himself talks about translation when dealing with other questions lets us infer his understanding(s) of ‘translation’, respectively tied to the underlying

‘conception of language’ (OLIVEIRA, 2007; 2012). So, it would be advisable to stick to Wittgenstein’s later conception of language when talking about ‘family resemblances’ and recur to the views of other philosophers or scientists only as a complement, looking at points of compatibility or disagreement — a standard Wittgensteinian procedure.

My approach differs from Tymoczko’s substantially also in the use of Granger’s notion of *a parte post* to characterize Toury’s ‘translational norms’ (with a ‘transcendental function’ in Moreno’s terms), instead of keeping the strictly Kantian notion of *a posteriori* (which applies to the empirical), which is how Tymoczko characterizes ‘cluster concepts’ in her terms and in Toury’s concept of translation. This might seem a very subtle point, but its implications are deep, because of the fundamental distinction from the ‘empirical’ to the ‘transcendental’ domain — a question very dear to philosophy.

Wilson, on his turn, also registers that Toury mentions Wittgenstein as a source, referring to the same passage transcribed at the beginning of this text (WILSON, 2016, 81 [TOURY, 1980, 17-18]). Nevertheless, he doesn’t seem to acknowledge, in this specific use, all the radical implications that thinking ‘meaning’ under the sign of family resemblances brings about — even though he points to Wittgenstein’s new understanding of language throughout the book and explores only concepts from the later work, which is a great move and goes much further than many Wittgenstein commentators (OLIVEIRA, 2020). Now, if translation is a concept organized by family resemblances (as so many others in natural languages), then ‘definition’ alone isn’t enough, and we must look at ‘application’, as suggested above. Moreover, I understand Toury’s categories of ‘adequacy’ and ‘acceptability’ not as poles of a “dichotomy”, as Wilson suggests (2016, 81), but instead as vectors in action at each and all translational decisions at various levels, amounting thus to *ad hoc* compromises — at *each decision* (TOURY 2012, 69-70; OLIVEIRA, 2019a, 574-575; 2019b, 226-233). It’s not this *or* that, but this *and* that instead. And we cannot know in advance how the decisions will be made, because they’re tied to the ‘circumstances’ of application — another vague and yet rigorous concept.

Anyway, the general tendency to look after a unifying point of view is forceful and has a long tradition. To this tradition belongs the idea that useful concepts have necessarily to rely on exact definitions, as discussed briefly in the following, starting with its Wittgensteinian dissolution. The Austrian philosopher held some concepts — such as ‘etc.’, ‘more or less’, ‘field of vision’, ‘memory’ and ‘expectation’ — to be intrinsically, constitutively vague. In a

recent paper, one of Azize's contributions was to remind that also family resemblances entail 'vagueness', yet 'vagueness' is not restricted to the former:

One centuries-long dream of reason can be expressed in the way the image of the priority of the exact in relation to the vague informs ideas as diverse and separated in time as the Platonic forms, the Leibnizian *mathesis universalis* and the Fregean third kingdom. [...] Although the discussion about "family resemblances" concepts (in the Wittgensteinian sense) is instrumental in defending our point, it is not to be confused with it. What is at stake is addressing the construction of the concepts in general giving logic priority, in this construction, to the vague in relation to the precise. (OLIVEIRA and AZIZE, 2021, 184-185).

Hanoch Ben-Yami gives a good account of what Azize calls a "centuries-long dream of reason", starting with a Platonic dialog:

Meno's difficulty, which he shares with several of Socrates' interlocutors in Plato's dialogues, reflects a historical fact. What Socrates is interested in would today be called a *definition*, a specification of something common to all and only the cases to which the concept applies. And the demand for definitions as the correct form of explanation was indeed an innovation of the historical Socrates, who "fixed thought for the first time on definitions" (ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysics* I 6, 987b1). Plato adopted, elaborated, and added his authority to this conception of definition as the only adequate form of the explanation of meaning.

Over the last 24 centuries, the sophisticated philosopher has generally sided with Plato and Socrates, rather than with Gorgias and Meno. Yet it is the latter who provide us with a better explanation of what was meant by virtue, as was noted already by Aristotle [...]. (BEN-YAMI, 2017, 407-408)

Ben-Yami goes on saying that, despite Aristotle, "to explain a concept has almost invariably meant, from Plato to this day, to define it", and that Wittgenstein "set himself against this conception of explanation early in the 1930s" (408). Here is no place for a review of the author's detailed discussion about the various passages where Wittgenstein and other philosophers tackle the question, with a privileged treatment of the relation between 'family resemblances' and 'vagueness', and the impact that such views has had especially in philosophy of language. We must thus content us with only his conclusion that "[h]ordes of philosophers have wasted much time in vain attempts to define the concept of game and show that Wittgenstein was wrong, yet their failures did not help convince them and others that he might have been right" (417).

Therefore, and disregarding for now other topics, I'd say a coherent use of Wittgenstein's 'family resemblance' should take 'vagueness' into full account, what — also in TS — hasn't yet been done in a systematic and rigorous way, despite some good advances in this direction, especially with Tymoczko's idea of '*translation'. Also remember Wittgenstein's already mentioned remark in PI § 69 ("— And you still owe me a definition of exactness"), which gains another dimension and shouldn't be underestimated, against the historical backdrop sketched by Ben-Yami.

If we now take a close look at Toury's notions of (1) 'adequacy' to the source text and (2) 'acceptability' in the target culture (TOURY, 2012, 69), whose combination constitutes his understanding of 'translation' as a concept organized by 'family resemblances' rather than by 'definition', it won't be difficult to see that the first one is an analogical vector (to bridge different systems), being thus constitutively vague, in the sense(s) of Wittgenstein and Stecconi. This implies that some degree of vagueness is a condition of possibility for translation (so understood), since the first step to bridge difference is necessarily an analogy. One could object that Toury's much valued 'pseudotranslations' go without such a first analogical step. My reply to this would be that the non-existent originals also play a role (protecting the 'author-translator' being a by-product), so they have a 'use', a 'meaning', like Wittgenstein's 'beetle in the box':

Suppose that everyone had a box with something in it which we call a "beetle" ["original"]. No one can ever look into anyone else's box, and everyone says he knows what a beetle [original] is only by looking at his beetle [original]. — Here it would be quite possible for everyone to have something different in his box. One might even imagine such a thing constantly changing. — But what if these people's word "beetle" ["original"] had a use nonetheless? — If so, it would not be as the name of a thing. The thing in the box doesn't belong to the language-game at all; not even as a *Something*: for the box might even be empty. (WITTGENSTEIN, 2009, 106e [PI, § 293])

Notice that Wittgenstein talks here about the irrelevance of an existing empiric object (as reference) for language to function, according to his understanding of 'meaning as use' (PI, § 43; *passim*) — which is at the basis of the conception of language that underlies concepts such as 'family resemblances', 'language-games' and, more generally, Wittgenstein's later work as a whole. Under the aegis of a referential (or Augustinian) conception of language, on the other hand, Wittgenstein's figure in PI § 293 would amount to pure nonsense. That would be the case of sticking to the 'picture theory' from *Tractatus* or aligning with the mentalist and/or other dogmatic positions Moreno refers to in the passage quoted above (1993, 31-32). Accordingly, aligning with referentialism and anti-essentialism at the same time, at the basic level of 'conception of language', seems impossible, as either alternative emerges from a different 'grammatical' conviction.

It seems clear, for instance, that a 'theory of translation' based on the conception of language underlying the 'neo-positivist' work of the Vienna Circle is not compatible with a stance based on the later Wittgenstein, even if a certain compatibility might be found when the language-game in question has a 'referential' character (natural sciences), or deals with non-empirical discourses, as logic — in a similar way as one can say that the idea of 'translation' within the 'picture-theory' from *Tractatus* builds a especial case from the perspective of Wittgenstein's later work, but not the other way around. The later work is larger.

Now, if we stick to the later Wittgenstein and bring Toury closer to him, one can say that ‘exactitude’ in translation is only to achieve within a specific language-game, under the sign of Toury’s ‘acceptability’ in the receiving system, where the opposition to the already existing elements of the target system will rearrange the limits of the various concepts. This is how actual translation changes the existing systems by introducing new elements — be them new ‘concepts’ or ‘shifts’ in existing ones, in the sense of Moreno’s (2012, 64).

3. Translation, meaning: in a system

Wilson’s (2016) overview of Wittgensteinian concepts useful for TS amounts to a Peircean ‘index’ showing that Wittgenstein set up a system/net of concepts that sustain each other, even if this wasn’t his philosophical goal. The very notion of ‘family resemblances’, as resulting from a ‘surveyable representation’ and used to discuss ‘language-games’, illustrates well how things stand (OLIVEIRA, 2020, 23-27). For this reason, one should be extremely careful not to use Wittgenstein’s concepts within other frames of references, especially competing ones, without a prophylactic test of compatibility.

García-Landa’s (2006) criticism on Tymoczko’s first approach to ‘family resemblances’ raises relevant questions, but the solutions provided bring even more serious problems about, eventually amounting to an essentialist and dogmatic position incompatible with Wittgenstein’s later work. He says, for instance: “Translation is a transference or a reproduction of meanings and only that” (2006, 438). “Reproduction”, “transference” of *what?* A putative stable meaning, without any influence of language differences and unaffected from the various kinds of mediation, such as interpretation (as understood in Hermeneutics), or empirical instances (as discussed in Descriptive Translation Studies and Sociology of Translation), and so forth? García-Landa talks of ‘language-games’ as if they were the same as ‘speech acts’, disregarding the radical differences that set apart speech act theorists from Wittgenstein. He even poses that “Wittgenstein *erred* when he wrote that it is not possible to find rules common to all [language-games/speech acts]” (437; *emphasis* added). Is that true? Is García-Landa’s reduction from language-games to speech acts philosophically acceptable, and does his general description involving ‘communication’ suffice to overcome the failure of ‘hordes of philosophers’ to prove Wittgenstein wrong? If so, Wittgenstein would ‘err’ not only in his advice against the drive to generalizations in the discussion of ‘family resemblances’ (PI, §§ 66-71). He’d be ‘wrong’ also in the considerations about the changeability of language-games (PI, § 23), the idea of ‘philosophical therapy’ as what applies to specific cases (PI, §§ 133, 254-5), and so forth.

Alternatively, one could say that Garcia-Landa doesn't seem to grasp the real scope of such — mutually sustaining — philosophical concepts or works deliberately against them. His stance would then amount to a misappropriation (willingly or not) — serving thus to illustrate how problematic all too rash attempts to mobilize Wittgenstein in other areas can be. So, I prefer to stick to Aristotle and Wittgenstein, in perceiving differences in 'use' as a crucial parameter, against Plato's demands of an exact definition from a common 'essence' (see Ben-Yami, 2007, above).

Nevertheless, Garcia-Landa does raise a relevant point by saying that simple language-games are embedded in complex ones (2006, 436). It's indeed productive to understand 'translation' not only as a stand-alone language-game as listed in PI § 23, but instead as particular move(s) in various language-games: a family of moves.

Sticking to philosophy, it's easy to see that continental philosophers as Heidegger and Derrida approach 'translation' differently than in 'translation between logics' — as discussed, e.g., by Itala D'Ottaviano. A look at the entries dedicated to different philosophers in *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Philosophy* or at the contributions to the 2021 Symposium *Philosophy in/on translation* (<https://wits.ac.za/transphil/symposium>) will confirm how much the uses of 'translation' in philosophy vary⁶ — complementing the 'cultural' reviews of Tymozko's (2014) and Gambier's (2018).

What matters for our discussion is that, despite all differences, we do use the same term 'translation' not only in different philosophical traditions, but also in quite different discourse communities. Considering this, we should understand 'translation' not only as a concept organized per 'family resemblances', but also as one that refers to different 'moves' within the more complex language-games played in variegated rhetorical contexts, as suggested in the title of this paper.

Take, for instance, Derrida's philosophical argument against 'logocentrism', leading to his call to let go translation as repetition of same ('equivalence' in age-old essentialism), and to understand the concept as 'regulated transformation' instead. Paul Ricœur, on his turn, is interested in emphasising the inevitable role of interpretation, when he talks of translation as the 'construction of the comparable', thus focussing the process of translating that creates 'equivalences' which might be accepted (or not) in a given community, instead of expecting them to be already there, at the level of the language systems (OLIVEIRA, 2019b; 2021). A

⁶ This paper is an extended version of my own contribution to the 2021 virtual meeting, but not all examples included there were also considered here (cf. YouTube: <https://bit.ly/43YaJ2y>).

certain kinship allows us to understand these two uses of ‘translation’ as belonging to a family, being anti-essentialist without saying necessarily the same. Davidson’s ‘radical interpretation’ vs. Quine’s ‘radical translation’ build yet another small, delimitable ‘family’ in the sense of our discussion. All these ‘moves’ — and many others — can be merged under a post-therapeutical concept of ‘*translation’, as organized by family resemblances and having as foundation “difference, similarity, and mediation” in the sense of Stecconi (2004, 8-9). Such a concept also accounts for the cases Yves Gambier (2018) excluded from his discussion, for being metaphorical or not pertaining to TS proper.

To conclude, it seems important to recall Moreno’s argument that the ‘meaning’ of *any* concept derives not from definition alone, but also from the set of its applications, encompassing cases not foreseen by the initial rules, or even those which might express different criteria (MORENO, 2012, 64). This approach lies deeper than Tymoczko’s notion of ‘cluster concepts’ but allows for her idea of ‘*translation’. It reconciles Toury’s ‘definition of translation’ as what ‘is presented or regarded as such’ with his own understanding that this concept operates per ‘family resemblances’ (TOURY, 2012, 69). Also recall that Wittgenstein’s ‘grammar’ supplies *a parte post* description(s) of the use(s) — with a ‘transcendental function’ in Moreno’s terms. So, Toury’s ‘translational norms’ aren’t purely empirical, even if Descriptive Translation Studies are understood as an empirical approach.

Looking at the transcendental dimension of such descriptions will certainly make it easier to see more clearly how (actual) translation works, if we take it not as an idealized demand, but as a process and result of human deed. The concept of ‘family resemblances’ applied to ‘*translation’ frees us from the necessity of idealizations, liberating the eye to see the ‘intermediary links’ that make it possible to use the *same* idea to describe different ‘moves’ in distinct, complex language-games — yet with no putative ‘common essence’: in a rigorous, even if not necessarily ‘exact’ way.

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