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"Good translating is very hard work"

Karl Popper, translation theorist in spite of himself

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Upon immigrating to New Zealand in 1937, Austrian-born philosopher of science Karl Raimund Popper lived and worked in the English-speaking world, where he published his major works in English. Life events forced him to engage in various forms of self-translation around the same time that he began earnestly working on translating Presocratic philosophical fragments into English. While he rejected language wholesale as an object of philosophical reflection, translation became an exception, a privileged occasion for philosophical reflection on language. This article reads Popper's thoughts on translation in the context of previously unpublished correspondence between Popper and potential translators of *Conjectures and Refutations* (1963, third edition 1968) from English to German. The article thereby mediates the tension between Popper's outspokenly perfectionistic demands on potential translators and his general thesis that scientific or philosophical language need only be as precise as the problem at hand requires.

Keywords: self-translation, translation of philosophy, twentieth-century Anglophone philosophy, exophonic writing, Vienna Circle in exile, translation theory and practice, classical philology

1. Introduction

In the early 1920s, Austrian-British philosopher Karl Popper (1902–1994) was peripherally involved with the emergent Vienna Circle. As a primary school teacher with no prominent publications to his name, Popper did not partake in the famous philosophers' meetings, but he shared many of their views. Like his colleagues, Popper railed against metaphysical speculation and championed the wider application of scientific methods to research in all fields as well as to creative output, political deliberation, and everyday life.

His thinking departed from the Vienna Circle's program, however, in that he belittled their interest in the translation of scientific theories. His contemporaries were concerned with translating ideas out of specialized jargons into transdisciplinary symbolic logic and ordinary language. In 1934, the same year that Popper published *Logik der Forschung,* Rudolph Carnap published *Logische Syntax der Sprache,* which outlines the limits of pure logic as a means of conveying empirical research claims. For Popper, Carnap's line of inquiry misconstrues language's communicative purpose: language exists to transmit ideas *adequately*, and the pursuit of perfect language is a waste of time. In a footnote added to *The Open Universe* (1982), for instance, Popper explains why he avoids the term 'ontology', even though the word's dictionary definition fits his argument precisely, because of its misleading associations. He then abruptly breaks off that discussion with the following sentence: "However that may be, questions of terminology are never important" (Popper 1982, 7). The infinite regress involved in the pursuit of better definitions risks distracting thinkers from *solvable* problems. To make systematic, prescriptive claims about an unstable, open system like a language is as misguided as trying to predict cloud movements precisely as if they were the movements of a clock's hands (Popper 1966). We should save our analytical energy for topics where aspirations to firm knowledge are better justified.

Despite having willfully relegated language to the margins of his philosophical project, Popper maintained high standards of clarity as a writer and translator. He regarded linguistic precision as philosophically insignificant, but questions of language leaked into his philosophical reflections in spite of his resolutions to ignore them. One should not overclarify one's statements, he argued throughout his philosophical career, because no degree of clarity will ever be adequate to prevent all possible misunderstandings. The only justification for reformulating one's language, then, is "with a view to avoiding those misunderstandings which have arisen or which you can foresee" (Popper 1976, 29). Those extant and foreseeable misunderstandings must have exceeded his expectations, considering that he took the perfection of his writing style ever more seriously as he engaged with ever new forms of translation throughout his lifetime: first, in the cultural self-translation of an exiled German-speaker who had to convert his entire professional discourse into a foreign one, then in the translations of Greek philosophical fragments into English as part of his polemical interpretations of the Presocratic philosophers Heraclitus and Parmenides, and finally in the textual self-translations that he performed and commissioned so that his English-language oeuvre would find an ear in the postwar German-speaking world, which he regarded as having abandoned the measured reason that distinguished Anglophone science and politics. Popper respected the difficulty of translation work, but he saw it as a pragmatic difficulty not worth analyzing conceptually; indeed, the vast complexity of translation work

was iconic for Popper of the impossibility of any serious inquiry into language, rhetoric, or translation.

Even more than other twentieth-century philosophers, Popper treated language as an instrument for thought, and, as for other mid-century analytic philosophers,[1] the complexity of translation ultimately served his argument that linguistic details are philosophically unimportant. In his autobiography, however, he admits at length that aesthetic and conceptual difficulties plague philosophical translation: "It is a mistake to think that in an attempt to translate a piece of purely theoretical writing, aesthetic considerations are not important" (Popper 1976, 21). His most detailed examples are in the footnotes where, for instance, he highlights the need for a commentary when translating Frege's argument in "Der Gedanke" (1918–1919), which depends on German having four words for 'horse', and of the need to correctly grasp Plato's argument when translating the word ἐφεξῆς *ephexês* 'the consecutive', or 'what follows' in Plato's *Timaeus* (Popper 1976, 237, 242). And yet such reflections never suffice to dislodge him from his dismissive position that "words play a merely technical or pragmatic role in the formulation of theories" – analogous to the instrumental role played by the letters we use to write words (Popper 1976, 20). This paper shows that a lifetime of vigorous engagement with translation ends up proving translation to be an analytical tool and an aesthetic medium that he could not dispense with, especially as he became more invested in his readings of ancient philosophical texts. He became a translation theorist when the act of clarifying Greek philosophers' ideas through translation became a cornerstone of his philosophical process.

This article traces Popper's deepening relationship with translation problems across his highly interlingual writing projects. The following section will discuss Popper's ambitions as a philosopher and how ambition fueled a perfectionistic engagement with both English and German. Section 3 shows how this perfectionism played out across the 1970s and 1980s through his difficulties in finding a translator to put his *Conjectures and Refutations* into German. Section 4 employs Lavinia Heller's (2020) elaboration of the theoretical concept of translaboration to analyze the multi-agent process through which the translation of *Conjectures and Refutations* was finally completed in the 1990s. Sections 5 and 6 show Popper no longer as unsatisfiable translation client but as exacting translator in his own right. Section 5 steps backwards chronologically to give examples of the stylistic care with which Popper revised his translations of the Heraclitus fragments he quoted in *The Open Society and its Enemies* (1945) for the second edition, after

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1. Many analytical philosophers discuss 'translatability' as exemplary of language itself, but they spare few words for actual translation work. See, for instance, Carnap (1937), Quine (1960), and Davidson (1986).

which the penultimate Section 6 deals with Popper's last major work on a book about Parmenides as a proto-scientist, a project which required him to weigh in on various Greek–English translation questions. The concluding section remarks on the interpenetration of life experience and translation theory that forced Popper to abandon his youthful position that linguistic questions are insignificant to philosophical thought. Popper's life-in-translation affirms the Humboldtian point that one first discovers the focalizing power of language by abiding at the interstices between languages.

2.   Karl Popper's self-translations

The term 'self-translation' belongs to a growing discourse within Translation Studies about the extent to which an author becomes a "privileged translator" when crafting his or her own legacy in a foreign language (Tanqueiro 2000, 59). It frequently occurs under the conditions of exile, such as when an author begins a career writing in one language, adopts the language of the new land, and then begins to write and translate in both languages. Exiled scholars often do not merely allow others to translate their work, nor merely translate it themselves, but rethink their ideas for a foreign-language context (or vice versa). Karl Popper is a typical exophonic academic writer in that he adopted English and then imported his German-language vocabulary as a means of translating past insights into his new work. Other scholars with Jewish ancestry who fled fascist Europe and continued their careers in English-speaking countries performed more conspicuous forms of self-translation. Felix Kaufmann rewrote his *Methodenlehre der Sozialwissenschaften* (1936) in English as *Methodology of the Social Sciences* (1944).[2] When Ernst Cassirer wrote *An Essay on Man* ([1944]1972), his first monograph in English, he prefaced it by describing it as a "fresh start" and "an entirely new book" written in response to his American colleagues' demand for a translation of his German magnum opus *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen* (1923–1929) – which he considered outdated and too long to merit full translation (Cassirer [1944]1972, i).

Self-translation is often billed as less constrained by the source text than other-translation due to the perceived authority of the "writer-translator [to] recapture the intentions of the author" (Fitch 1988, 125). Successful German-speaking scholars in exile would sometimes not only adopt English as their pro-

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2. One reviewer describes the book's main effect as a kind of intralingual translation: "Dr. Kaufmann's chief technique of analysis involves the translation of general problems into questions concerning rules of scientific procedure" (Mills 1945, 471).

fessional language but would also oversee the translation of their work back into German during their lifetimes, thus staging a translation *à rebours*. The most famous case is Hannah Arendt, who reworked *The Human Condition* (1958) into an expanded edition, *Vita Activa* (1960), in her native language, German. Weigel (2018) sees Arendt's self-translation as motivated by a desire to rewrite her American work in the style of the German academic culture that formed her thinking. Translation theorists widely acknowledge that there is no more empowering position for a translator than a so-called 'reverse self-translation' where the translator has both the authority of an author and a better knowledge of the target language than they had of the language they employed as authors of the original (Mantini 2010). But the moment when exiled writers return to their mother language is full of the unruly power unleashed by the stirring of old memories. Weigel (2018) enhances the basis for reverse self-translators' authority by grounding it not in notions of mastery, but in the self-questioning process of working through that occurs when an author can rethink ideas in a more trusted language.

Less well studied than Arendt's is Popper's engagement in an exacting process of collaborative reverse self-translation when he begins searching for the ideal translator for his *Conjectures and Refutations* during the 1960s. His is the type of work more typically meant by the term self-translation: the faithful, delayed rendering of a text from the author's L2 back into their L1 (Jung 2002, 22–26). Also typical for self-translations, Popper's translation work was homoskopic, meaning that it aimed to give the source text a similar rhetorical position, or *skopos*, in the parlance of Reiß and Vermeer (1984, 2013). Among the motivations that Jung (2002, 49) discusses for an author's rethinking of an academic text when self-translating it for a new audience, "optimization" is strikingly more important than cultural, skopic, or conventional motivations, since Popper fundamentally approaches self-translation as an 'author's editor' (i.e., as the editor of his own work). He works closely with carefully selected translators to see his work presented in a fully satisfactory German. His goal was not to think his ideas further and anew in a mother language whose nuances he missed, as Arendt did, seizing her chance to work in her more fluent first language. Far from it, he did not sentimentalize the advantages of one language over another. But as we will see shortly, his experiences in exile – especially in adapting a less strictly scientific, more humanistic genre of writing – and his passion for precision found an outlet in a passion for exact translation. He thus took commissioning his German translations as seriously as he took writing books in the first place.

Karl Popper died in 1994, at age 92, at which point his work as a critic of communism may have exhausted its purpose, but his authorial ambitions had not ceased, as exhibited by frequent correspondence with translators, editors, and publishers in the last month of his life. His political outspokenness earned Popper

a place in "an international anticommunist intelligentsia that operated across national borders and undertook to build a liberal-democratic trans-Atlantic culture," as his biographer Malachi Hacohen describes the group of philosophers, including Popper, who wrote for the CIA-sponsored Congress for Cultural Freedom (Hacohen 2009, 38). Popper's capacity to mediate between Europe and the United States during the Cold War depended in large part on the success of textual and cultural self-translations and the highly supervised translations of his own work into other languages.

When Popper fled fascist Austria for an academic position in Christchurch, New Zealand in 1937, he quit publishing in German and began publishing in English (Belke 1987). After having published *Logik der Forschung* (1934) in German, he wrote his English-language 'classics of cold war liberalism', beginning with *The Open Society and its Enemies* (1945), which reads Heraclitus, Plato, Hegel, and Marx as illustrations of the damaging effects of 'historicism' on philosophy and society.[3] The book attracted plenty of criticism among historians since he had only begun learning Greek in Christchurch and had not read much Hegel before launching his polemic (Belke 2013, 69). He knew Marx better from his prior involvement in Viennese socialist politics, and his criticism of Marx is not as severe.

Popper's political philosophy can be read as an interdisciplinary translation of his philosophy of science: a key barometer of political freedom for Popper is a society's capacity to protect scientific discourse from the threat of censorship. Like the relationship between source and target text, Popper describes his writings on science and politics as "interdependent" in a 1974 interview: "My theory of knowledge, my philosophy of science and my political philosophy are original only in their interdependence ("Gespräch mit Karl Popper," quoted in Hacohen 2002, 713). And his most famous argument in the philosophy of science, that a claim is scientific only if it is 'falsifiable', would be politicized when he applied it against influential modern thinkers, like Freud and Marx, whose legacies have shaped institutions and governments. Throughout his ambitious career, Popper's successes were products of various forms of translation. His early work had to be translated into English, and the archival record shows that he was immensely con-

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3. Hacohen (2009, 41) groups Popper's *The Open Society and its Enemies* (1945) with several comparable "anti-utopian" (read: anti-communist) works: Sperber's (1938) *Zur Analyse der Tyrannis*, Talmon's (1952) *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy*, Aron's (1955) *L'Opium des intellectuels*, and Berlin's ([1958]2002) "Two Concepts of Freedom." Readers of Hacohen's biography of Popper are aware that Popper was a less staunch anti-communist than his peers, since Popper did not wish to single out Marxism for critique, but rather to point out "the role that historicism had played in encouraging totalitarian tendencies in Marxism" (Bar-Am and Agassi 2005, 19).

cerned with the quality of the German translations of the work he published in English. If translation made Popper as influential as he was, he had left little to chance. In correspondence, Popper frequently refers to himself as an experienced translator as a way of justifying his active role in overseeing the translation of his own texts at every stage: from the selection and vetting of potential translators, to critiquing and editing their translations, and finally, to taking the actual work into his own hands at several points.

Collaborations between authors and translators often result in authors' exercise of greater control over the final product (see Hersant 2017, 102–103). Popper began his career writing in German and thus demands from his translators that his German-language translations correspond to the arguments in his earlier, German-language work, *Logik der Forschung*. As we will see, ten potential translators engaged in the process of producing a German version of *Conjectures and Refutations*. Only five of those translators' work made it into the final edition, which appeared posthumously in 1994, Popper's last year of life. Up until his death on September 17, 1994, Popper worked on the translation, even trying to rewrite Part VII of Chapter 10, but not finishing because of exhaustion – sometimes requiring two whole days of sleep between intensive writing sessions (Keuth 2009, 657).

Popper may have shown special interest in this translation since he considered *Conjectures and Refutations* his best work stylistically (see Section 3). Theoretically, good style meant achieving "clarity," rather than seeking *le mot juste*, since "linguistic precision is a phantom, and problems connected with the meaning or definition of words are unimportant" (Popper [1963]1968, 28). Since meaning is conventional, it should not depend on the authority of those who claim to possess "the 'true' or 'proper' meaning of a term" (19). This line of thinking suggests a quasi-Platonist epistemology, which sees language as instrumental to – not constitutive of – thought.

The book's title does not refer to the argumentative structure of the book, but to the "trial and error method" he championed against other scientific models like Baconian induction or Hegelian dialectic (314).[4] The chapters are adapted from previous talks and essays and they represent not his own conjectures and his refutations of others' views, but rather his long-held opinions on science and politics. The book's titular 'conjectures and refutations' are the two main scientific moves

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4. Popper acknowledges that 'dialectic' too is a kind of trial process. The problem is that it allows no possibility of error; dialectic means that theories are vulnerable to negation whenever competing theories emerge, not because the new theories are more valid by any criterion. Furthermore, it proposes that elements of old theses are worth preserving, simply for once having been offered – no matter how blatantly false they are proven (Popper [1963]1968, 314–315).

that Popper advocates: "boldly proposing theories" and "trying our best to show that these are erroneous," and ultimately "accepting them tentatively if our critical efforts are unsuccessful" (51). Knowledge thus derives neither from crystal-clear systematic rationality nor from a proper understanding of authoritative sources. The conjecture-and-refutation method never arrives at infallible views, but infallibility is an unnecessary ideal: "all knowledge is human [...] it is mixed with our errors, our prejudices, our dreams, and our hopes" (30).

Popper felt that the English-speaking world best embodied the ideals of intellectual freedom that he advocated. In the work with which this article deals most centrally, he implies that English-speaking societies are the clearest beneficiaries of the liberation of intellect from various forms of authoritarianism (among which he counts politicized religion, fascism, and communism – alongside subtler forms of 'essentialism'). "The great movement of liberation which started in the Renaissance and led through the many vicissitudes of the reformation and the religious and revolutionary wars to the free societies in which the English-speaking peoples are privileged to live" (5) is part of the brief intellectual history provided in the introduction of *Conjectures and Refutations*. This view in no way indicates agreement with Otto Neurath and Rudolf Carnap that English provides a better philosophical instrument than other languages.

Popper was not immune to the infatuation with English so prevalent among his exiled colleagues. His geographic, cultural, and linguistic *translatio* into the Anglophone world required him to master scholarly English and write more exactingly than he had previously. Reflecting on his experience writing *The Poverty of Historicism* (1957) his first English-language book, he writes the following in his autobiography: "My German style in *Logik der Forschung* had been reasonably light – for German readers; but I discovered that English standards of writing were utterly different, and far higher than German standards" (Popper 1976, 113–114). As an example of these higher standards, he presents his observation that polysyllabic words are more acceptable in German prose than in English. In the German translation of this passage (which Popper oversaw), the 'standards of English' are specifically linked to clarity (*Klarheit*). Popper admired the clarity of English prose, which inspired linguists like Charles Ogden to promote English as the international language of science, philosophy, and commerce (see McElvenny 2017).

Becoming a more exacting writer made Popper more deeply invested in terminological debates than he lets on.[5] He regularly compared the difficulty of

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5. Popper's discussion of 'corroboration' in the first part of his *Postscript to the Logic of Scientific Discovery* is dedicated largely to the misleadingness of Carnap's translation 'degree of confirmation' for *Bewährungsgrund*. In light of the misunderstanding, he claims to have over-

translating philosophy with the work of philosophizing, but his exactingness in evaluating translators suggests that he did not grant them the autonomy to engage in conjecture – the core of thought for Popper, whether scientific, philosophical, or merely instrumental. An image of the ideal translator emerges from Popper's collaborative process around the translation of *Conjectures and Refutations* into German. The emphasis on the hardship of translation work contrasts with the joy he associates with *conjecturing*. Perhaps Popper would account for this discrepancy with the common observation that the majority of thought consists of refutation, that is, not the joy of having ideas, but the pain of testing their validity. As he repeats in *Conjectures and Refutations*, but had already been saying since *Logik der Forschung*, "our latest and best theory is always an attempt to incorporate all the falsifications ever found in the field, by explaining them in the simplest way" (Popper 1968, 116–117). Taking on the twin hardships of testing ideas and of making them plain, Popper trusts no one but himself to apply the method of conjecture and refutation in crafting good translations. He is not willing to translate a whole book on his own, however, and therefore he applies the trial-and-error process to finding a suitable translator.

3.   Attempted and rejected translations of *Conjectures and Refutations*

For several years after 1963, when Popper's *Conjectures and Refutations* appeared in English, the author began writing to potential German translators. He always made his high standards for translation known at the outset of the correspondence. We can glean some insight into why this project triggered such an extreme form of Popper's perfectionism from his letter to Dr. Leonhard Walentik, asking him whether he would be willing to translate the book. Here we learn that Popper considered his English prose style to be especially masterful in this work:

> It is better written than either the *Poverty* or *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*. Thus stylistic considerations are more important. This creates a certain difficulty for the translator. There are jokes in the book, and a certain amount of irony, including self-irony. Some of these points may easily be overlooked at a first reading or when translating quickly.   (Popper 2009, 652)

There would be nothing quick about the translation process. Walentik responded that he would need about two years to complete the task, after which Popper

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come his dismissiveness about terminology and begun advocating 'degree of corroboration' to distinguish the *strength* of well-tested theory from the *probability* of its accuracy (Popper 1983, 227–233).

began inquiring among other translators. Popper might not have balked so quickly at Walentik's response if he had known then that he would continue working on the translation up until his death almost three decades later.

When Hubert Kiesewetter, a former student of Popper's, wrote to him on December 18, 1967 with the words, "I am willing to translate your Conjectures and Refutations!" (Popper and correspondents 1967, Box 65, Folder 5), Popper's response was diplomatic but sobering:

> I should be glad to have you as a translator, but I must tell you from my own experience that good translating is very hard work, and difficult work, as is all good writing. I am not satisfied with any of my own translations – even though I worked very hard on them. (ibid.)

That "hard work" on his "own translations" may, on the one hand, refer in part to the revisions he made to his quotations from Plato and Heraclitus. On the other hand, one could question whether Popper's sortie into classical philology is representative of the challenges of translation in general. To translate a clearly written book like *Conjectures and Refutations* from the rising global lingua franca into one's native language involves far less cultural translation or philological struggle than translating philosophical ideas with which Popper was not sympathetic, from a highly inflected dead language in which Popper was not an expert, into his second language, which he mainly acquired after his school years.

Popper conveys his acute awareness of the challenges of translation in his autobiography, where he derives his views on the indeterminacy of language from his experiences with translation:

> Everybody who has done some translating, and who has thought about it, knows that there is no such thing as a grammatically correct and also almost literal translation of any interesting text. Every good translation is an *interpretation* of the original text; and I would even go so far as to say that every good translation of a nontrivial text must be a theoretical reconstruction. (Popper 1976, 23)

While far from advocating that translation requires a mystical experience like Heidegger's "spirit-channeling" of Presocratic philosophers through translation (Robinson 2001, 100–108), Popper's insistence that translation requires 'interpretation' does set up philosophical insight as a prerequisite for the successful translation of philosophical texts.

It is thus clear why he would warn Kiesewetter that translation might require more from him than he expects. Kiesewetter is one of several translators with whom Popper corresponded who ended up not translating *Conjectures and Refutations* into German. Some translators refused, others were rejected. It is a testimony to the hardship involved in translation that either Popper's own physical

health or that of potential translators is mentioned in *every* correspondence with a failed translation candidate. But health never turns out to be the decisive factor in a translator's refusing or being rejected. Kiesewetter suffered a spinal injury that delayed the submission of his first translation sample, and Popper did not respond coldly to the delay, but only to the sample once received. In an interview with Ernst Gombrich, Kiesewetter discusses Popper's dissatisfaction with five or six translation drafts. Gombrich replied that a friend of his wished to translate Popper, but only after he was dead (Kiesewetter 2001, 106). According to personal correspondence, Kiesewetter eventually quit the translation project in order to spend more time writing his dissertation.

Even before rejecting Kiesewetter's many samples, Popper had already rejected the sample sent to him by Dr. Hubert Schleichert on May 16, 1968, on grounds that it was "gut aber nicht druckreif" 'good but not ready for press' (Popper and correspondents 1967, Box 65, Folder 7). The main issue was that Popper's own health and time concerns meant that he would not have time to edit a translation and thus needed a translator who could produce a satisfactory translation, unsupervised (ibid.). The rejection of Schleichert's sample came after the two had negotiated a satisfactory translator's fee (which Popper claimed he could guarantee to pay from his own funds if the press paid too little), but Popper retracted even this offer due to the sinking value of the pound.

Before he had decided against Kiesewetter's and Schleichert's translation samples, Popper had high hopes that Dr. Franz Oppacher would complete the translation. They corresponded while Oppacher was traveling in India and Afghanistan, the former of which brought Popper fond recollections of good students he had encountered in England. Writing at the recommendation of Dr. Paul Weingartner (currently professor emeritus at the University of Salzburg), Popper approached Oppacher with full disclosure of his selectiveness with regard to translators. In a letter of March 3, 1967 – at the beginning of his search for a translator of *Conjectures and Refutations* – he confessed to Oppacher that he had already had "the painful task of having to reject the attempts of several translators" (Box 65, Folder 6). The letter, written in English, contains a description of this experience of disappointment, which involved reading sample translations, believing for a moment that he must have written "pointless" passages in the English versions, and only later realizing that

> though each sentence was more or less correctly translated, the coherence of the argument was missing, and therefore the meaning or point of the paragraph. In other words, in order to translate properly this kind of writing one has to take care to understand what the whole paragraph tries to convey; what the essential steps in the argument are (I am always arguing); and what are asides and allusions (unfortunately, I am in the habit of making allusions and asides which, if

they are not treated as such in the translation, are liable to sidetrack and to destroy
the whole argument).   (ibid.)

He goes on to warn "I do not think that the payment will be bad; on the other
hand, I know from my own experience that a good translation has to be a labout
[sic] of love; one has to go over it several times, both with the original text and
without" (ibid.). Within the context of Popper's search for a translator for *Conjectures and Refutations*, this paragraph is Popper's longest, most vehement statement on the difficulty of translation work.

Popper had a Pyrrhic victory in conveying his standards to Oppacher:
Oppacher was apparently able to meet Popper's high standards, but the standards
may ultimately have been what undermined Oppacher's desire to complete the
translation. In a letter to his publisher, Georg Siebeck, on October 25, 1967, Popper
described Oppacher's sample translation as "ausgezeichnet" 'outstanding' (Box
312, Folder 04). He also cited Oppacher's own high standards as one of the reasons why he ultimately refused to complete the translation: "He was not satisfied
with his translation sample (which is in itself evidence that it was very good)"
(ibid., my translation).[6] How does an author scare off a translator by conveying
their high (perfectionistic) standards?

Immediately after Oppacher's offer to submit a sample, Popper clarified on
April 18, 1967, that the sample translation must not just be good, but "wirklich
druckreif " 'actually be ready for press', and Popper apparently liked the sample he
had received in mid-September (Box 65, Folder 6). However, in a letter sent on
September 27, Oppacher declined to take on the task, for a litany of reasons, but
first and foremost because he did not trust himself to perform adequate work. He
replied as follows:

> Dear Professor,
> Since your departure from Innsbruck, I have struggled to translate "On the
> Sources of Knowledge and of Ignorance" in an adequate manner. The result was
> very discouraging for me: I was unsatisfied with many of the formulations I had
> attempted and hardly ever had the feeling that I had captured the argument.
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>   (ibid., my translation)[7]

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6. "[…] er war von seiner Probeübersetzung nicht befriedigt (was allein schon ein Hinweis
darauf ist, dass es sehr gut gewesen wäre)." (Popper and correspondents 1967, Box 312, Folder
4).

7. "Sehr geehrter Herr Professor, seit Ihrer Abreise aus Innsbruck habe ich mich bemüht, den
Artikel 'On the Sources of Knowledge and of Ignorance' in befriedigende Weise zu übersetzen.
Das Ergebnis war für mich sehr entmutigend: ich war mit vielen der versuchten Formulierungen unzufrieden und hatte kaum jemals das Gefühl, den Sinn getroffen zu haben." (Popper and
correspondents 1967, Box 65, Folder 6).

He goes on to list three reasons why the circumstances were also unsuitable: (1) His application for relief from military service was likely to be rejected since he could not pass off a 'cold' he had caught as hepatitis, (2) a colleague who had offered to help him was busy with his *Habilitationsverfahren*, and (3) the work was taking him so long that he could not afford to devote the time for the modest fee on offer. Popper responded somewhat heartbroken, writing quite prophetically on October 9, 1967 (in German): "I don't think I will ever find such a good translator" (Box 65, Folder 6).[8] Over the next years, he switched strategies from looking for one ideal translator to assembling a translation team that consisted of colleagues, their wives, himself, and his own wife.

4.   Translaboration

Karl Popper's intense involvement with his own translations reinforces the conventional view that authors are entitled to the highest authority over the circulation of their texts, in translation and otherwise. Even if his interactions with translators are primarily commanding and corrective, his insistence on the smooth expression of his thought across languages within the archived correspondence with his translators reveals the constitutive heteronomy of translation – a currently prevalent understanding of the translation process within Translation Studies. Anthony Cordingley and Céline Manning introduce their volume on *Collaborative Translation* with the observation that translation always results from the will of multiple agents and thus that every act of translation is a "collaborative translation" (Cordingley and Manning 2017, 27). Taking her cue from Cordingley and Manning, Alexa Alfer introduces a special issue of *Translation and Translanguaging in Multilingual Contexts* on "Translaboration" by affirming not only that all translation is collaborative, but that the study of interlingual translation provides a model for understanding collaboration generally from which other human sciences can learn (Alfer 2017, 276, 289).

Since Alfer's coinage, the concept of translaboration has provided translation scholars with a means of isolating the power of translation as a form of knowledge production – in a way that invites us to read translated texts with transdisciplinary approaches that encompass the social, cultural, economic, literary, historical, and linguistic complexities of translation, without letting the concept of translation bleed unrecognizably into the domain of its etymological and conceptual neighbors, like migration and metaphor. Lavinia Heller has further demonstrated the

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8. "Ich glaube nicht dass ich je wieder einen so guten Übersetzer finden werde" (Popper and correspondents 1967, Box 65, Folder 6).

potential of this flexible concept to show what philosophers like Popper might expect from the translation of their texts: a translaboration, not necessarily between the translator and the author, but between the translator and the author's oeuvre as a system of thought (Heller 2020, 18). Philosophical translation performs translaboration most apparently when it not only rethinks the ideas in a text, but also engages with a thinker's intellectual approach. As Heller points out, paratexts – like forewords, footnotes, and even glossaries – are ideal forums for making such translaboration visible. Popper's correspondence with potential translators is just such a paratextual testimony to the translaborative character of rendering *Conjectures and Refutations* into German.

The concept of 'translaboration' denotes the complex interaction endemic to all translation processes – but its applications thus far have aimed to illuminate where interactions come to matter in translation processes (Alfer 2017). Popper explicitly collaborates with the translators of his own texts by initiating dialogue with them, but even his solitary translations of Parmenides demonstrate the translaborative character of translation since he explicitly distinguishes his translations from translations published by seasoned classical philologists.

Popper's translations of Parmenides and his commissioning work both exemplify the most ordinary instantiation of translaboration, namely a translator's efforts to understand an author on his own terms. Heller (2020, 16) sees translaboration of this sort unfolding when Italian translator Alfredo Marini translates Martin Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*, since Marini reconstructs the morphological complexity of Heidegger's terminology using Italian morphemes. Such a hermeneutic relationship requires research on the translator's part, in an effort to understand his or her philosophical and linguistic peculiarities. But, as Heller asserts, that gesture does not necessarily require a verbal dialogue to take place between translator and author. It does not even require the author to be involved in the translation (or even alive at the time of translation).

While many philosophical authors care a great deal about their legacy in foreign languages, few actively participate in the translation process. Popper takes the demand for translaboration to an extreme in the demands he puts on the translation process: remotely interviewing translators of *Conjectures and Refutations* before closely evaluating their work. It was of utmost importance that translators understood and appreciated his entire philosophical lifework. Heller describes this kind of relationship well: "A translation only acquires philosophical character when it can give insight into its specifically (philosophical) linguistic, that is, dialogic relationship to the source text" (Heller 2020, 18). In his insistence that translations of his English-language work into German engage with a context established in 1934 by his German work, Popper too performs what Heller finds

in Marini: the curation of coherence within a philosopher's oeuvre through translation.

While the translator's willingness to read the author's thought in a larger context stands to benefit a translation, 'authorization', the author's supervision of a translation, comes at a high cost to the translator's freedom of thought and creativity. After surveying a number of revealing cases, Zielinska-Elliott and Kaminka (2017, 170–171) conclude that "not infrequently, the author's involvement can radically change the translator's relationship to the text by creating a situation in which translation occurs under the aegis of a source of potentially absolute authority." Their study describes the way that the authors' exercise of control can backfire on their future productivity – as consciousness of future translation can paralyze some authors from completing future work. They give the example of Mikhail Shishkin, claiming that he feels inhibited now when he sits down to write because he frets over what future translators will do with his work.

A desire for control throughout the editorial process was familiar to colleagues and acquaintances who had worked closely with Popper on writing projects other than translations. Richard Gombrich describes the extreme difficulty that his father, Ernst, suffered when accommodating Popper's extreme perfectionism:

> My father helped Popper in his first publications. They started working on the texts together. Working with Popper was an all-day job.
> He must be one of the most annoying human beings of all time. He was an absolute perfectionist. He was flat out prepared to discuss the placement of a comma in one sentence for an entire afternoon.   (Rath 2019; my translation)[9]

Popper's controlling perfectionism was on full display in the collaborations that ensued after the failed attempts to secure a single translator for *Conjectures and Refutations*. The 1970s were a time of extensive collaboration on the translation. By 1974, three married couples had begun to collaborate on the translation of *Conjectures and Refutations*: the men in the couples were all established philosophers, Hans Albert, Karl Popper, and Oliver E. Ford. Ford completed his work the fastest, but it was sunk by a fatal flaw as described in a letter sent with Ford's manuscript on March 25, 1974: "Note that Dr. Ford has <u>not</u> read L.d.F. in German, and consequently there is a risk that the wrong words may be used for technical

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9. "Mein Vater half Popper mit den ersten Veröffentlichungen. Sie begannen, miteinander zu arbeiten. Mit Popper zu arbeiten war ein Ganztagjob. Er muss einer der anstrengendsten Menschen aller Zeiten gewesen sein. Er war ein absoluter Perfektionist. Er war ohne Weiteres in der Lage, einen ganzen Vormittag über die Plazierung eines Beistrichs in einem Satz zu diskutieren." (Richard Gombrich, in Rath 2019)

terms" (Popper and correspondents 1967, Box 65, Folder 10). The anonymous letter then goes on to convey Mrs. Ford's suggestion that "the Philosopher of Science" himself proofread the translation. Considering Popper's demand that the translators produce print-ready translations, Mrs. Ford's presumptuous suggestion (that *he himself* would correct someone else's translation) could have irritated Popper enormously. Perhaps it was even this suggestion that helped him decide not to use Ford's translation at all. In an undated letter, he wrote to Mrs. Ford that Dr. Ford's translations were bad, and that Ford had not read *Logik der Forschung*, which led him to make numerous terminological errors. Popper expresses this in three scathing lines in a note addressed to Gretl Albert (see Figure 1).
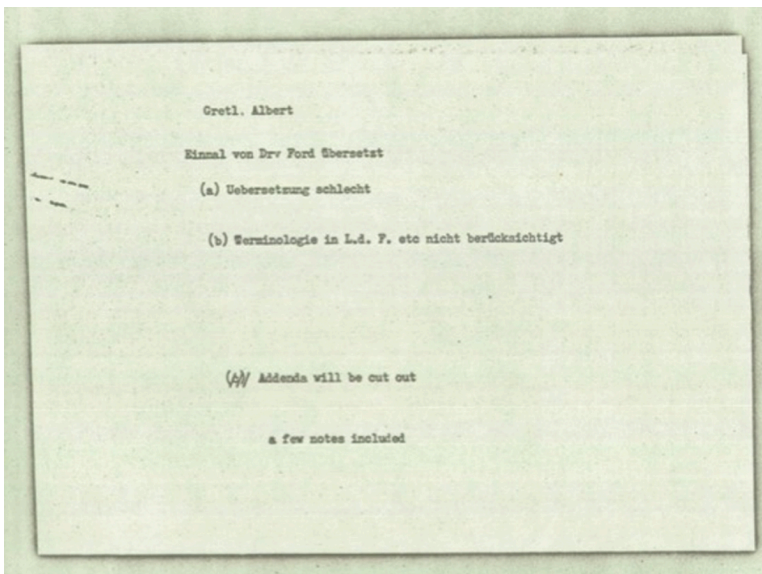

Figure 1. Note included in archive file on the German translation of *Conjectures and Refutations*[10]

This terse complaint about Ford's translation reappears throughout Popper's communications with the other translators. The repetition of his rationale functions as a kind of warning to show others how he humiliates those who disregard his wishes. In the end, no part of Ford's translation was published. The rejection

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10. The text reads: "Gretl Albert / Einmal von Dr. Ford übersetzt / (a) Übersetzung schlecht / (b) Terminologie in L.d.F. etc nicht berücksichtigt / Addenda will be cut out / a few notes included" ('Gretl Albert / First translated by Dr. Ford / (a) [the] translation [is] bad / (b) terminology in [The Logic of Scientific Discovery] etc. [was] not heeded / Addenda will be cut out / a few notes included'.

of such a monumental translational labor amounts to the author's aggressive punishment of a perceived failure of translaboration.

Dr. and Mrs. Popper wrote jointly, albeit in the first-person singular, to Gretl Albert on September 15, 1978 about the translation work that they had finished on *Conjectures and Refutations*:

> I did not dare to send C&R before warning you that I have myself translated the Introduction [...] Chapter 7 and 8 exist in my own German translation; also 15, 16, 17, and 18 (or so I believe). We are just preparing a collection of all the translations – good or bad. Yours ever Karl and Hennie.   (ibid.)

Although the reflexive "I [...] myself" suggests that the author is the translator of the text in question, labor practices of the time suggest that a wife might perform such tasks with only tacit acknowledgement. Ernst Gomrich claims that Hennie constantly typed Karl's dictations (Kiesewetter 2001, 108). Despite the ambiguity introduced by the final "we" and dual signature, Hennie might have translated the chapters alone. Gretl Albert ended up editing Karl and/or Hennie's translation of the introduction and sending it back with corrections and the following note on July 25, 1979: "On the pages that you will want changed, because they do not sound good, make a squiggly line" (Popper and correspondents 1967, Box 65, Folder 10). The most vocal arbiter of sounding good would, presumably, be Karl again.

All of this expresses Popper's wish to maximize readability, out of his love of his own texts – a love he hopes his translators will share. In 1992, when Kamen Lozev had begun the Bulgarian translation of *The Open Society and its Enemies*, Popper's advice to Lozev was to care about the text: "The relation of a Translator to his work is similar to that of an author to his: it is a very personal relation; and I believe it will be so with you – love or hate; there is no third possibility" (Popper 1992b). Here we see a kind of translatorial Platonism, in which translators' emotional engagement with their work can be either collaborative or sabotaging, where love represents neither passion nor conviction but the willingness to conform. Popper's criteria for good German are fairly standard edits for clarity, precision, and elegance: *von der ich eben gesprochen habe* 'of which I have just spoken' becomes *die ich eben erwähnt habe* 'which I have just mentioned' (see Popper and correspondents 1967, Box 65, Folder 17, Page 2). Sometimes it is a matter of more accurate formulations. In the sentence, *Ich bin nicht sicher, dass diese Erklärung meinen Freund befriedigte* 'I am not sure, that this explanation satisfied my friend,' he changes *dass* 'that' to *ob* 'whether', a more precise conjunction for the context (ibid.). Some edits show a greater sensitivity to German idiom, for instance, when he changes the translation *als die wahre Theorie* [...] *angesehen* 'seen as the true theory' into *für die wahre Theorie* [...] *gehalten* 'taken as the true

theory' (Box 65, Folder 17, Page 3). In short, Popper's edits show devotion to the clarification of his own thoughts through a variety of logical and stylistic improvements.

The last translator to join the effort of translating *Conjectures and Refutations* was Eva Schiffer. Popper wrote a similarly emotional letter to Schiffer about the importance of a translator's feelings for the book: "Translation is a moral problem, first and foremost. You must feel responsible both towards the author as well as – and even more so – towards the work. You have to be capable of learning to love the work" (Popper 1992b, 656; my translation).[11] In the case of Popper's extension of his own perfectionism to the translaborative process, we can see the consequences of an extreme undermining of the translator's autonomy: Translators who grasp Popper's perfectionism become too intimidated to complete the work, like Oppacher and perhaps Walentik; translators who work independently, like Ford, produce unsatisfactory work; and the only acceptable translators are collaborators, friends who partake in Popper's own self-love even in the knowledge that "he must be one of the most annoying human beings in the world" (Rath 2019; my translation).[12]

Translaboration involving a perfectionistic author thus amounts to a heteronomy that erupts again and again into an author's wish to regain an unattainable autonomy over the translated text. The author in question saw himself as a capable translator, and thus (in spite of reservations about engaging with linguistic questions) became quite an opinionated prescriptive theorist of translation.

5.   Heraclitus variations

Although Popper positioned himself as the final authority on his own texts, it would be reductive to claim that he based his authority on authorship alone and sought translators who would mediate his own self-translation in the most naïve sense, that is, as the "quest to attain oneness with the author and its original" (Cordingley and Manning 2017, 3). He also invoked an authority specific to the craft of translation: that of a rigorous translator of ancient Greek quotations into English.

Throughout Popper's correspondence with potential translators of *Conjectures and Refutations*, beginning in the 1960s, he described (good) translation

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11. "Übersetzen ist, vor allem, ein moralisches Problem. Man muß sich verantwortlich fühlen; sowohl dem Autor gegenüber, wie auch – und noch mehr – dem *Werk* gegenüber. Man muß imstande sein, das Werk lieben zu lernen." (Popper 1992b, 656)

12. "Er muss einer der anstrengendsten Menschen aller Zeiten gewesen sein." (Rath 2019)

as a difficult, well-nigh impossible task on par with knowing final truths ("truth is above human authority") (Popper 1968, 39). For complex reasons, he did not lump translation with the other linguistic problems that he took as sophistical distractions from conceptual problems, at least when the translation of his own texts was at stake. He repeatedly asserted that he knew how difficult translation is from experience. The most likely experience he could have in mind was his extensive translation from ancient Greek which began during his exile in New Zealand.

Translation theory has long acknowledged that translation is always tied to specific rhetorical goals, and the desperation that Popper felt about getting out of New Zealand made his *skopos* an expressive and an argumentative one: to communicate his scholarly credentials – of ancient Greek now, not just of philosophy of science – and to provide translations that support his interpretations of Greek philosophy.[13] He notes in his autobiography that he has "been accused of bias in [his] translations" and avers that a translation must be biased: Paul Shorey's *Republic* reflects agreement with Plato, where his own translation reflects disagreement (Popper 1976, 136). With the view that a translation *should* serve an argument, he translates ancient Greek texts into English whenever he quotes them in *The Open Society and its Enemies*.[14]

Writing *The Open Society and Its Enemies* in New Zealand, without the library resources he was accustomed to, Popper sank deeper into debt on a salary that was lower than he had anticipated. He was betting on the book's quality as his ticket to a better job offer, somewhere in Britain, and therefore he sacrificed many nights of sleep to work on it (to the point of severe vision problems) over every vacation he got, which during the teaching term was every weekend (Kiesewetter 2001, 55–57). The seriousness with which he approached his translations from the Ionic Greek philosophical fragments (attributed to Heraclitus of Ephesus) is

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13. Attfield notices that Popper translates δόκοι *dókoi* 'opinions' as "guesses" in the sentence "For all is but a woven web of guesses" and remarks that he might as well have translated it as 'conjectures' (Attfield 2014, 15). This translation and comment directly serve Popper's argument in his posthumous *The World of Parmenides* (1998) that Xenophanes invented the method of conjecture and refutation (Popper 1998, 121).

14.   There is an interesting analogy with the preservation of Presocratic philosophical sources by the unsympathetic Church Fathers in the quotations that appear in their publications with Popper's unsympathetic translations. The analogy is strengthened through the fact that in both cases these quotations take on a powerful transmissive function. Popper takes his role as transmitter of quotations from Plato and Heraclitus to a new audience through English translations – while criticizing them for being 'historicists'. He acknowledges in *Conjectures and Refutations* that the Church Fathers could be trusted more for their translations than for their understanding of Heraclitus: "Though Hippolytus may perhaps be a good source when he cites Heraclitus, he clearly cannot be taken very seriously when he interprets Heraclitus" ([1963]1968, 163).
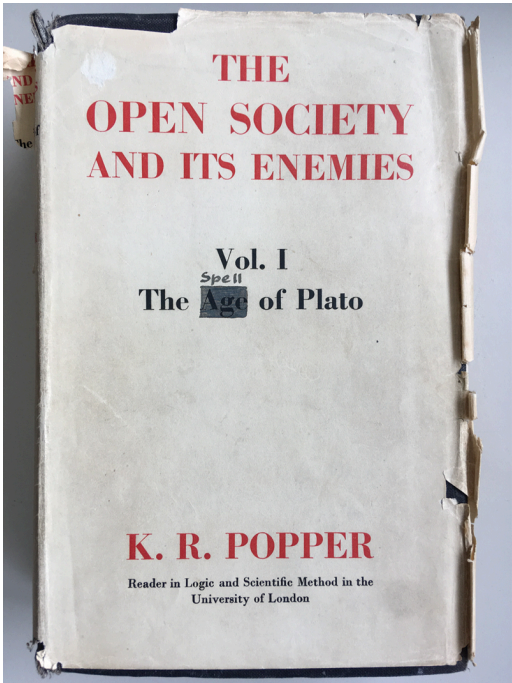
Figure 2. Popper's annotations to the cover of *The Open Society and its Enemies*

evident in the extensiveness of the revisions he made to his author's copy of the first edition for publication in the second edition (see cover in Figure 2). Figure 3 shows one example of a passage where Popper devotes at least as much editorial attention to his Heraclitus translations as to his own prose.
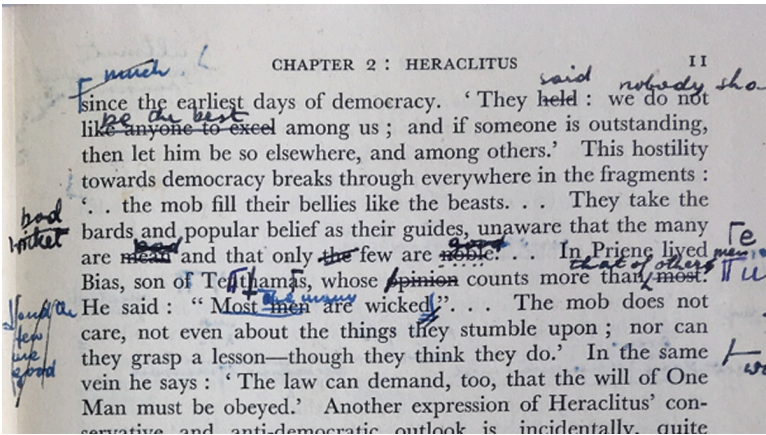

Figure 3. Popper's annotations to *The Open Society and its Enemies*

The opening chapter of *The Open Society and its Enemies* presents Heraclitus as an elitist precursor to the explicitly anti-democratic Plato. In Popper's estimation, both of these ancient philosophers fear societal change and write as apologists for the old aristocratic order and as 'enemies' of the open society; that is, of a democracy whose laws and norms exist to foster the kind of peace and pluralism where the open exchange of ideas is possible. Popper sees democracy as key to both scientific progress and social harmony. But it encroaches on old hierarchies of rank dear to elitists like Heraclitus.

Popper's translations would have to be compatible with this argument. There is at least one example where Popper seems to edit a translation as a way of tailoring it to his argument. Here is the Heraclitus fragment (DK B121) as Popper edited it for the second edition (Figure 3):

> They **said** ~~held~~: **nobody shall be the best** ~~we do not like anyone to excel~~ among us; and if someone is outstanding then let him be so elsewhere, among others.
>
> (Popper 1945, 11)[15]

These revisions capture the simplicity of Heraclitus's Greek. For indeed, the Greek φάντες *phántes* simply means '[they were] saying' and μηδὲ εἷς ὀνήιστος ἔστω *medè eîs onéistos ésto* means 'let no one be the best'. To emphasize Popper's observation that translation could always be more perfect, we can note that, even here, Popper could have gone further in recreating the simplicity of Ionian prose style: εἰ δὲ μή *ei dè mé* just means 'and if not' (that is, 'and if *not nobody* is the best'). That double negation does not sound idiomatic in English, and while 'otherwise' would capture the sense perfectly, Popper's translation keeps the *if*-clause, expanding it from an elliptical clause into a full one by supplying a subject and verb ("someone is").

Popper's translation is not however meant to caricature Heraclitus as a weak, simplistic thinker. If Popper is concerned here with aligning Heraclitus with a damaging anti-scientific worldview, in a chapter of *Conjectures and Refutations* entitled "Back to the Presocratics," Popper credits Heraclitus with articulating an historically vital philosophical provocation: "Things are not really things, they are processes" (Popper 1968, 144). Popper takes this doctrine of perpetual change as the inspiration behind the opposite view: the next generation's proposal that there are *unchanging* laws that govern the observable changes in the natural world. On a stylistic level, Popper avoids giving the misimpression that Heraclitus's archaic praise of aristocracy was expressed with the rhetorical flourishes meant to flaunt

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15. For all quotations showing changes that Popper intended for the second edition of *The Open Society and its Enemies*, bold text indicates text to be added while crossed-out text indicates text to be removed.

his elite literacy. Popper is right to see Heraclitus as a social critic: nearly half of Heraclitus's fragments criticize βλὰξ *blàx* 'fools' (B87), παντὶ *pantì* 'the masses' (B104), ὁκόταν *okótan* 'the drunk' (B117), and those with βαρβάρους ψυχὰς *barbárous psychàs* 'barbarian souls' (B107).[16] These passages present him as a cynic, critical of human folly in its variety, rather than as an apologist for the elite.

Another example from the same passage shows the simplification strategy, and its performance of a crude vocabulary precisely when Heraclitus is stating his case against the rabble: in Popper's edits, he changes the words "mean" to "bad" and "noble" to "great" in the sentence:

> [...] the mob fill their bellies like the beasts [...]. They take the bards and popular belief as their guides, unaware that the many are **bad** ~~mean~~ and that only ~~the~~ few are **great** ~~noble~~ [...].   (Popper 1945, 11)

Popper goes on to argue that Heraclitus's two-word ontology πάντα ῥεῖ *pánta rhei* 'everything flows' bespeaks a motivation common to all historicist philosophies: resignation in the face of change (e.g., revolution, social upheaval, or dramatic socio-economic restructuring, like the democratic institutions whose influence fluctuated during their lifetimes). Heraclitus represents for Popper the view that social order is occasionally overturned. In translating Heraclitus's description of the divine power to overturn human institutions, Popper elevates the rhetoric to a loftier – though also more concise and poetic (one might say *gedichtet*) – tone for the next edition:

> The order of the world, which is the same for all things, has not been **erected** ~~made~~, neither by ~~a~~ gods, nor by ~~a~~ m~~ean;~~ ~~i~~**I**t always was **and**~~,~~ is~~,~~ and will be an **ever** ~~eternally~~ living fire, ~~with a law that measures its~~ flaring up and ~~a law that measures its~~ dying down **according to measure** [...]. In its advance, the Fire will judge and convict everything.   (10)

The revised translation conveys poetic features of the Greek, like the polysyndeton "was and is and will be," and the replacement of the verbose embedded relative clause "with a law that measures its" by the pithy phrase "according to measure." In the published second edition, "according to measure" occurs both after "flaring up" and "dying down" – diluting the zeugmatic effect of brevity (Popper 1952, 14).

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16. That said, Popper's argument that Heraclitus is a conservative social critic requires a more complex reading. He also, in an earlier part of the fragment that Popper quotes, attacks individuals like Hesiod (B106), Pythagoras (B129), and the Ephesians (B121). The aim of Heraclitus's attacks is not always simple to reconstruct, and he certainly lacks aristocratic poise in his other favorite topics: the filthiness of corpses and the meaninglessness of death (see B96 and B98).

The new translation does better justice to the artistry that made Heraclitus's intuitions influential, even as Popper rejects those intuitions as products of a short-sighted fear of change. As he writes in the introduction, Popper's "harsh words" for "some of the greatest among the intellectual leaders of mankind" are spoken out of the "conviction that if our civilization is to survive, we must break with the habit of deference to great men" (xxxix). Even if "deference" is harmful to democracy, Popper is respectful enough towards thinkers like Heraclitus that he reworks his translations to capture the directness and euphony of their language (ibid.).
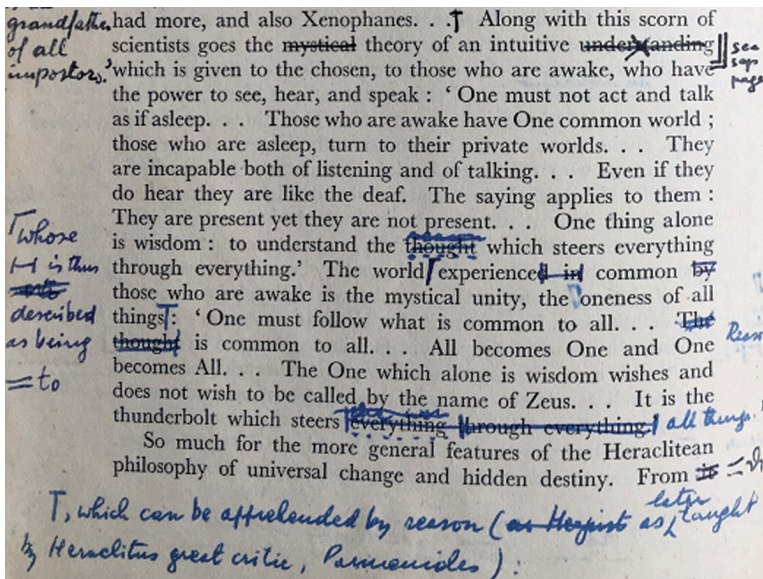
Figure 4. Popper's annotations to *The Open Society and its Enemies*

On the other hand, Popper's perfectionistic tinkering with his translations sometimes results in *Verschlimmbesserung*, that is, an attempt at improvement that makes a situation worse. In an example of Heraclitus's mysticism, Popper adds a relative clause where a more elegant elliptical construction had sufficed before (see Figure 4):

> The world **whose** experience̶d̶ **is thus described as being** i̶n̶ common **to** b̶y̶ those who are awake is the mystical unity, the oneness of all things, **which can be apprehended by reason (as later taught by Heraclitus['s] great critic, Parmenides).**
>
> (Popper 1945, 12)

The parenthetical reference to Parmenides did not make it into the second edition of *The Open Society and its Enemies*. If anything, this ultimately discarded, handwritten edit reflects Popper's deployment of "thick translation" (Appiah 1993) as a tool to think through his case for the superiority of a philosopher with whom he feels much stronger intellectual kinship than with Heraclitus. The superior philosopher is Parmenides of Elea.

6. Interpreting Parmenides through translation

If the struggle to translate Heraclitus properly could be reduced to the instrumental goal of writing clearly, translating Parmenides could not be taken so lightly and would certainly not leave Popper indifferent to translation's philosophical value. Right up to his death in 1994, Popper continued to write extensively about his interpretation of Parmenides. Those writings, published posthumously as *The World of Parmenides* (1998), extensively compare other published German and English translations of Xenophanes's and Parmenides's fragments. One of the papers from those writings mentions Popper's first encounter with Parmenides at "15 or 16" years of age (Popper 1992a, 12). He wrote that he "was overwhelmed by the meeting," and the paper goes on to discuss the importance of translating Parmenides with an appropriate understanding of his scientifically promising distrust of sense information as a source of knowledge (12, 15).[17] The translation of Parmenides came to occupy him even more intensively than the translation of Heraclitus. This passion is understandable since he considers Parmenides's rationalism a leap ahead of Heraclitus's mystical rejection of the possibility of knowledge.

In 1968, during the same period when Popper was actively searching for a German translator for *Conjectures and Refutations*, he wrote an addendum to his chapter "Back to the Presocratics" entitled "Further Remarks on the Presocratics, Especially on Parmenides." The addendum appears in the third English edition of *Conjectures and Refutations* (1968), and is concerned almost exclusively with concrete translation questions. It is clearer in the addendum than anywhere else in Popper's oeuvre that Popper would never underestimate the importance of trans-

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17. His translation of Parmenides shows even more clearly than in his earlier work his penchant for archaizing translation (and his lack of ambition in meter or rhyme):

> What is, at any one time, in their much-erring sense organs' mixture,
> That men use as a stop-gap for thinking. They treat, as if equal:
> Reasoning powers of man, and his sense organs' nature or mixture.
> What in this mixture prevails they call thought, in each man and all.
>
> (Popper 1992a, 18)

lation to the task of philosophy. Like his Viennese colleagues, Popper spent much of his career arguing against 'pseudo-problems' in the belief that, when philosophers ask relevant questions, they can provide ethical orientation to all sectors of society.

The chapter on Parmenides is meant "to show how epistemological and logical problems and theories might have arisen in the course of a critical debate of *cosmological problems and theories*" (Popper 1968, 165; emphasis in original). With the requisite humility, he ventures a falsifiable conjecture regarding the history of philosophy. While his Heraclitus translations go from straightforward to nearly crude in tone, his Parmenides translations contain archaizing (Victorian) poetics, such as enjambment and hyperbaton, as in the clause "do not let wander your blinded / eye." (Popper 1968, 165). In an unannounced rhetorical reversal, the elitist mystic Heraclitus was translated to emphasize his boorishness while the critical rationalist Parmenides is translated to exude lordly refinement.

While the rhetorical effect of his translations functions without being stated explicitly, Popper also engages in explicit justifications of his ancient Greek translations. In these arguments, translation ends up becoming the ground zero of Popper's claims about the history of philosophy. He takes Heraclitus as having presented a vision of *logos* as an invisible law of nature, not observable by the human senses. Through the influence of that theory, Parmenides sought to advance a theory of 'intellectualism or rationalism' (which would inspire Pythagoras and Plato). In both of these readings he initiates conflict with interpretations by classicists and meets them on their own ground by raising questions of how to *translate* Greek sources. He disagrees with Karl Reinhardt, for instance, who "conjectures that there was a lost fragment of Heraclitus, alluded to in Hippolytus, which read [πῦρ φρόνιμον] '*pur phronimon*' or [πῦρ φρονοῦν] '*pur Phronoun*'" (Popper 1968, 163). He suggests that such a fragment must be read as "thinking fire" or "fire as a thought process" and argues that to read the passage as indicating that "fire is providence" is a tendentious attempt "to establish the semi-Christian character of Heraclitus' teaching" (ibid.).

His main disputants on matters philological are Geoffrey Kirk and John Raven. Since the 1940s (in *The Open Society and its Enemies*), Popper had disagreed with their reading of Heraclitus that Heraclitean fire is a rational cause behind a palpably *balanced* order in the universe. In Popper's understanding, Heraclitus's theory of flux describes an invisible order or disorder that may have little to do with the order we perceive with our senses. It is this anti-sensualism, which he controversially attributes to Heraclitus *and* Parmenides, that he defends at length through arguments about how to translate the latter.

He defends the translations of three Greek words in the remarks that support his interpretation: (1) the translation of παρελάσση *parelassêi* as 'led astray'

(against Kirk and Raven's 'outstrip'), (2) of πολυπλάγκτων *poluplánkton* as 'much-erring' (against Kirk and Raven's 'much wandering' and supported by Guthrie), and (3) of μελέων *meléon* as 'sense-organs' (against almost everyone's 'limbs', but supported by the illustrious Diels) (Popper 1968, 408).[18] The latter two occur in the sentence he translates: "For as, at any one time, is the much-erring sense-organs' mixture, / So does knowledge appear to men" (ibid.). This sentence, among others, clinches Popper's argument that Parmenides sees the senses as the source of many unfortunate errors, from which we can only purify our thought by rigorously applying reason. The translation of those two words is so crucial to Popper's own argumentation that he writes, "If these two translations are correct, then the interpretation of the rest of the passage follows almost by necessity" (ibid.). The language of 'correctness' and 'necessity' in this passage runs counter to the discussion of translation's indeterminacy in his autobiography. Popper's enthusiasm for philology appears to have blinded him momentarily to his own claim that one cannot speak about cultural matters (like the interpretation of texts) with the same certainty that one can speak about scientific ones. He is aware that he is exaggerating the significance of these comments' importance – but their decisiveness is nonetheless the kernel of the last argument he puts forth in later editions of *Conjectures and Refutations*.

Popper, as a philosopher of science, engages with an object, Parmenides's fragments, which, as a text, can only become an object of scientific inquiry if we ask the right questions – just as dreams and history are too indeterminate for the kinds of inquiry to which Freud and Marx submit them. To what extent did Popper discover translation criticism as a method that makes the interpretation of discourse slightly less indeterminate? Does this require a privileging of the target-language discourse, or at least the obscurity of the source language (which, in the case of Greek antiquity, requires an entire academic discipline to reconstruct)? If so, then Popper's implicit theory of translation provides the groundwork for an epistemology of translation.

Because translation plays such a central role in his interpretation of Parmenides, it ends up becoming part of Popper's methodological toolkit for working on the history of philosophy. Even hermeneutically oriented philosophers tend to show less patience with translation questions when making major claims about the history of philosophy. Arendt, Blumenberg, and Cassirer, for instance, often take the translation of their historical sources for granted. Popper selects translation criticism as a method once he finds himself in disagreement with other classicists, whose primary disciplinary distinction is their mastery of classical lan-

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18. Popper continued defending his translation of μελός *melos* as 'sense organ' in later essays collected in the posthumous *The World of Parmenides* (Popper 1998, 73–74, 282).

guages. Part of his theory of science is that an investigation must begin with an assessment of the level of detail at which one can reasonably hope to know an object. But scientific breakthroughs sometimes enhance the degree of precision possible, like the insight that the supposedly elementary atoms contain subatomic particles. Translation shows Popper a more precise method for interpreting texts than he had previously thought possible.

7.   Conclusion

Popper's explicit claims about translation are not in themselves revolutionary. They generally reflect either questionable clichés or long-established truisms of the field of Translation Studies. In his most elaborate discussion of translation – in "Long Digression Concerning Essentialism" from his autobiography – his respect for the complexity of translation problems is not his main point. The discussion of translation ultimately serves only to defend his argument that a focus on terminological precision diverts attention away from the enlightening pursuit of the truth of statements towards the arbitrary sharpening of the meanings of words (Popper 1976, 19). A perfectly precise translation is therefore as unattainable as a perfectly defined word, "although a translation may be bad because it is not *sufficiently* precise, a *precise* translation of a difficult text simply does not exist" (22; emphasis in original).

If his practice is consistent with his claims, then the examples of his edits to translations (shown in Sections 4 and 5 of this article) could simply represent *clarifications* rather than efforts to find more *precise* language, since he did indeed value clarity, as he states in the following maxim: "Every increase in clarity is of intellectual value in itself; an increase in precision or exactness has only a pragmatic value as a means to some definite end" (ibid.). On the other hand, his desire for control over his translators' process betrays an exceptionalism when his own ideas are at stake. If not only having *understood* his previous work but also retaining its terminology were not an important criterion in the selection of a translator, then he would not have rejected Ford's translations on the latter basis (see Figure 1). It appears here that, when his own ideas are at stake, he is looking for the kind of terminology-preserving translation that Heidegger had in Marini, what Heller (2020) describes as a particularly fruitful translaboration.

Following Alfer's insight that translaboration provides a model for thinking about collaboration more generally, one could ask whether Popper's view of science accounts inadequately for the interpersonal element in the collective nature of contemporary empirical research, which inherently involves co-operation alongside anti-intellectual desires, like the stubborn wish to be proven right, to

please one's superiors, and to publish results that will satisfy sponsors. In any case, the uncomfortable fact that translation is inherently relational[19] – and is therefore more error-prone than an autonomous mental process of conjecture and refutation – spurs Popper to wish to control not only the results of a translation, but the *affect* of the translator at work.

In the poignant letter to his Bulgarian translator, Kamen Lozev, cited in Section 4, Popper writes that "translation is, above all, a moral problem. One must feel responsible; both towards the author as well as – even more – towards the author's work. One must be prepared to love that work" (Popper 1992b, 656; my translation).[20] The author-directed translaborative process should result in a text that is not only acceptable to the author, but in one that reaffirms the author's own conclusions. Popper's translators of course only "surrender to [the author] as a writer, not as an intending subject," as Spivak (2000, 378) describes the paradigm of literary translation; but the militant urgency of Cold War philosophical translation commissioner blurs the line between adhering to a writer's work and an individual's will. The 'love' for the work that Popper demands requires not just understanding it, but mobilizing his arguments in another language. The value Popper places on 'good' translation calls for a reconsideration of the stance he held since the 1930s, that "questions of terminology are never important" (Popper 1982, 7). Most translation theorists would go further than Popper, who argues that "every good translation is an *interpretation*," since *every* translation is an interpretation – good or otherwise (Popper 1976, 23). In his reading of Parmenides, Popper further demonstrates the value of translation: interpreting complex texts may *require* a translation process. This point too is a truism of translation theory, but the insight is hardly evident in Popper's prior rejection of (inter)linguistic problems as distractions from philosophical inquiry.

In acknowledging that translation provides a well-nigh indispensable resource for interpreting texts, Popper appears to be conceding a point to his old Viennese opponents, like Otto Neurath, who developed an 'isotype' pictogram language as a kind of intersemiotic translation of statistical information for a wider public (Neurath 2010). Language becomes a worthy topic of reflection for Popper precisely in the moment of its interlingual translation. This insight has also been a truism of the hermeneutic theory of translation since Schleiermacher's

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19. That the 'relational' aspect of translation can be as brutally violent as the rest of interpersonal relations (especially where unequally militarized nations or ethnic groups are involved) is a topic explored in Cardozo (2020).

20. "Übersetzen ist, vor allem, ein moralisches Problem. Man muß sich verantwortlich fühlen; sowohl dem Autor gegenüber, wie auch – und noch mehr – dem *Werk* gegenüber. Man muß imstande sein, das Werk lieben zu lernen." (Popper 1992b, 656)

claim that translation can enrich a national language. But it appears not to have been a topic that Popper would have thought about if it were not for his intensive experiences with the difficulty of translation.

In psychoanalytic terms, Popper repressed the significance of linguistic questions to philosophical inquiry, seeing the indeterminacy of language as a debilitating nuisance, but the repressed returned through the detour of translation. Experience taught Popper that translation not only reveals the fundamental indeterminacy of semantics; much more, translation enables textual reception to occur at a more sophisticated level. He might never have reached that insight if life circumstances had not forced translation problems on him. While his discovery of the analyzable core of Parmenides's language in two lexemes may overturn his rejection of linguistic problems as undecidable, it fits well with his anti-determinism: the invention of new conjectures is not solely rational but draws its material from all areas of life, from research and from life experiences, such as exile from one's home and one's first language.

Popper's case allows us to make a few conjectures for future thought on translation:

1. In many domains, one can know about something without experiencing it firsthand. One can study a disease without having suffered it, for example. But experience often inspires a level of interest otherwise hard to come by: the experience of translating texts into other languages undermines any good faith claim that the appearance of a system among the signifiers of ordinary language could be said to have a rational structure. As in Quine's (1960, 215) discussion of "radical translation" achieved by the "approximate identification of stimulus meanings" in *Word and Object*, the indeterminacy of translation was one of Popper's main pieces of evidence for the idea that linguistic precision is a quixotic goal.
2. Insights that translation experience gives with one hand, it may take away with the other. Popper's engagement with translation would end up making his distinction between clarity and precision murkier. While the case can be made that he was only editing his Heraclitus translations for 'clarity', Popper became obsessive about matters of conceptual precision when the stakes were more personal – with his own work, and even when translating Parmenides, in whom he discerned a predecessor to his own philosophy of science. Just as the deconstructionists read authors' rhetoric against their explicit claims, one can read authors' translation strategies against their own argumentative instrumentalizations of translation as a concept.
3. Translation is often a messy multiagent process. The collaborative aspects of any undertaking are often as unwelcome as the hassles and disappoint-

ments involved in democratic decision-making. For a Cold War thinker, self-translation could appear to be the liberal solution to this communistic stagnation, but self-translation does not escape the intrinsically collaborative nature of translation. Self-translations are often neither self-made nor especially faithful to a source text. Popper's *Conjectures and Refutations* entered the German language through the labors of at least a dozen loyal friends (all unofficial translators and editors considered). The work does not fall among those self-translations that transform the original to the extent of challenging "the binary notion of original-translation," which as Bassnett (2013, 15) notes is usually "simplistic and unhelpful" for thinking about bilingual authors' so-called self-translations. But the story of Popper's efforts to control the outcome of a translation process becomes a fable with the moral 'all translation is collaborative': the more obsessively an author tries to commission a translation with a unified style and vision, the more difficult it becomes, the more help they need, and the more blatantly collaborative the process becomes.

Popper integrated his experiences in translation into his theorization of language. Yet translation had lessons for him that exceeded the parameters of his theories. Read both as a theorist and as a life-in-translation, Popper's is a case of a translation theorist in spite of himself.

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Box 65: "Conjectures and Refutations, 1962."

Box 312: "J.C.B. Mohr/Paul Siebeck (Hans Georg Siebeck, Georg Siebeck), re The Poverty of Historicism, The Logic of Scientific Discovery, Die beiden Grundprobleme der Erkenntnistheorie, and Conjectures and Refutations."

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