# CHAPTER II

# TRANSLATION

## #7 Translation: The Traditional Notion

Unfortunately, the notion of translation is not like the notion of analyticity in that translation has never been discussed in much detail. Just what the translator does has been uncritically and intuitively assumed by most thinkers, it would seem, until very recent times. Even if there have been thinkers in the past who were concerned with the process and activity of translation, it is evident that their work has not become part of the various mainstreams of generally accepted and philosophically interesting themes. Translation seems to have been looked upon as a commonplace given. After all, translators have been doing their business for at least as long as there has been intercourse between "foreign" cultures.

Analyticity, on the other hand, as we have seen in Chapter I, was given a fairly definitive statement by Kant and reflects a respectable history and evolution of ideas both pre- and post- Kant.

There is, however, a close connection between the two notions of analyticity and translation. Both make significant demands upon the notion of meaning which, as we have also seen, Quine attacks - at least in its intuitive guise. One of the things I hope to do in this second chapter is to outline Quine's own theory of meaning in more detail, and expand upon his rejection of uncritical notions of meaning.

Besides the fact that both analyticity and translation make heavy demands upon the notion of meaning, they both do so in confusingly similar ways: i.e., they both claim - intuitively, at least - to reflect some kind of "sameness" relationship. Analytic sentences and correct translations are supposed to share or preserve the same meaning. Intuitively, a good or correct translation of a foreign linguistic expression "captures" the same meaning as the original. This is sometimes expressed by saying that the translation "preserves", "carries over", or "retains" the meaning of the original. But what is the explanation of the translator's activity which lies somewhere behind those picturesque but unhelpful metaphors? If translation can, indeed, be judged "correct" or "incorrect", then there must be some standard of judgment. A theory of translation, it seems would try to indicate that standard so as to establish a "science" of good translation which would be part of what Quine might call a "science of second intention."

Quine's main contribution seems to be his insisting that the traditional notion of translation is un-scientific. What Quine is saying is that translators are not doing what they think they are doing when they are engaged in the activity of translation. Before going into Quine's specific objections to the commonly held notion of translation, I want to see if we can give some kind of substance to this more intuitive and traditional theory of translation.

As I indicated above, explicitly formal explanations of just what goes on in the translational process are few and far between. The provision implied by "explicitly formal" is intended to draw attention to the fact that much implicit and non-formal work has been done. This work usually manifests itself in books and articles dealing with what Quine would call non-radical translation. They are concerned with such specific activities as translation the Bible from one particular language to another. Or, perhaps, they deal with the translation of poetry as opposed to novels. I have not, myself, gone to these works in preparing the present section, but I would speculate that a careful analysis of these works would yield a more or less traditional notion of translation much like that to be outlined below. I also hope to show in later sections that the usual traditional theories of non-radical translation to be gleaned from such works suffers when compared to the more critical notions of Quine.

A brief review of the Philosopher's Index will show that most of the work concerning translation which has been done in the last ten years has been in response to Quine's thesis of the indeterminacy of radical translation. Of the few works available which deal with translation in general, I have chosen W. Haas' "Theory of Translation."[1] in order to get a clearer idea of the traditional notion of translation as well as some idea of some of the weaknesses of that notion.

Before going into Hass' article, however, I would like to look at the primary reference source for the uncritical version of various notions, a current dictionary. The *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*[2] for 1969 defines translation as "an act or process of expressing in another language, systematically retaining the original sense or meaning." Definitions in other dictionaries seem to be substantially the same. This definition seems to accord well with what most people feel is the case regarding translation. But for our purposes we need a more detailed explanation and explication and for this I think the Haas article is useful.

Haas' article is one of the few which tries to *explain* what goes on during the activity of translating. According to

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[1] W. Haas, "The Theory of Translation," *Philosophy* 37 (1962): pp. 208 - 228.

[2] *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, (New York: American Heritage, 1969).

Haas, the traditional notion is that translation is a triadic process as it involves two linguistic expressions (one in each of the two different languages) and one "meaning" which is somehow shared by each of the linguistic expressions in just those cases where each expression is, in fact, a translation of the other. Each linguistic expression together with its meaning is called a sign so that translation might also be looked upon as a diadic relationship of signs. But the important point is that the meaning is separate from any and all particular languages. The translator, traditionally, must apprehend each of the three members separately. Moreover, according to this theory, what is translated is not some sentence or other linguistic expression, but rather, the meaning which underlies both expressions and somehow lies outside of any particular language. The word "translate", then, would carry the same weight as the metaphors "capture", "preserve", etc., mentioned above.

This notion, like the analyticity notion, seems to carry great intuitive weight. But the fact that it "does . . . accord with some deeply ingrained habits of thought."[1] does not imply that it is an accurate assessment of the situation. Indeed, Haas implies that some of the intuitive weight of this traditional notion derives from the intuitive bias we have for the mind-body dualism; and we are familiar with Quine's attack on that intuitive notion. Much of the Haas article in devoted to rejecting what he sees as the result of uncritically accepting a dualistic presupposition behind the basic triadic scheme of translation. That dualistic presupposition is that meanings and linguistic expressions are "two distinct orders of thing."[1] Haas thinks that a result of this uncritical thinking is a committment to a reference theory of meaning. The argument, briefly put, runs thus: Traditionally, a triadic scheme of translation (expression 1 : meaning : expression 2) presumes a dualistic relationship between linguistic expressions and their non-linguistic meanings since the meaning may be apprehended without reference to any particular language. These two notions commit one to a referential theory of meaning as an explanation of what a translation a translation is since it is the non-linguistic meaning (or referent) which the translator identifies and then "preserves" in a good translation.

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[1] W. Haas, "The Theory of Translation." p. 208.

Over the course of history, the non-linguistic referent of a linguistic expression has assumed many guises. The early empiricists located "meaning" in ideas or internal entities or states. There then came a "Copernican flip"[2] which externalized meaning for the empiricists and upon which Quine places much emphasis and importance. For a time, there was a tendency to credit physical objects with this role of meaning referent. This latter theory might be referred to as a naive reference theory of meaning. Disenchantment with these various intuitive theories has led some to attempt to reformulate them in various ways.

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[1] W. Haas, "The Theory of Translation," p. 211.

[2] W. V. O. Quine, "Philosophical Progress in Language Theory," Metaphilosophy, 1, 1, (jan., 1970), p. 4.

Quine seems to feel that many of today's positivists are committing themselves to the untenable position of a reference theory of meaning, even though it is clothed in more respectable and theoretical language. This committment is obvious when those positivists insist that an explanation of linguistic behavior, including translations, demands the postulation of propositional attitudes.[1] A propositional attitude is the apprehension of a "non-linguistic" referent of a linguistic expression. A proposition is a non-linguistic referent because it is an entity which stands apart from all and any linguistic expressions, but which "gives" that linguistic expression its meaning. Propositions are meaning vehicles which stand under (or sometimes behind or above) individual sentences or statements. The clearest statement of the propositional attitudes is by one of its firmest proponents,

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[1] Gilbert Harman, "Quine on Meaning and Existence, I", p. 144 f.

A. J. Ayer in the introduction to the second edition of his Language, Truth and Logic. There Ayer tries to show that it is philosophically respectable to insist on a distinction between sentences, statements and propositions.

Quine, on the other hand, holds that linguistic behavior, including translation, can be fully and adequately explained simply in terms of sentential attitudes. I think that this conclusion of Quine's can be appreciated more fully by referring back to his positivistic and behavioristic background as outlined in the Introduction. In the first place, the historical development of empiricism (or positivism) parallels the development in what is seen as the basic unit of empirical meaning. From the idea (or word) of Hume's day, there was a development to regard first the sentence and then the theory as the unit of meaning. On this point Quine seems to be in agreement with other positivists including Carnap and Hempel, although there is evidence that Quine would even go so far as to regard the totality of theories as the meaningful unit.[1]

I conclude, therefore, that Quine's major departure from his contemporaries is basically on an interpretation of the psychology or epistemology (see # 6) of translation and/or of

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[1] W. V. O. Quine, "Two Dogmas", section VI.

the theory of meaning. Quine feels that all the relevant and philosophically interesting features of language can be adequately accounted for by observing individual's behavior when confronted with sentences. Quine is emphatic on this point: "there is nothing in meaning that is not in behavior."[1] And behavior here means response to sentential stimulations.

But Quine has other, and more challenging objections to the presupposition of propsitional attitudes as a means of explaining meaning and translation. Quine begins his argument by noting the intuitive desire for propositions: "Part of what encouraged admission of propositions was a wish for eternal truth-value vehicles independent of particular languages."[2] Quine then goes on to point to the most obvious difficulty with such a theory:

> The trouble with propositions, as cognitive meanings of eternal sentences, is individuation. Given two eternal sentences, themselves visibly different as linguistic forms, it is not sufficiently clear under what circumstances to say that they mean the same proposition.

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[1] W. V. O. Quine, "Philosophical Progress in Language Theory," p. 14.

[2] W. V. O. Quine, Word and Object, p. 246.

> It is on this score that the sentences are less dubious entities than propositions.[1]

If my above analysis is correct, then what Quine is rejecting here, besides propositional attitudes, is one of the foundation blocks of the traditional notion of translation, namely, a reference theory of meaning which supposes a dualistic relationship between linguistic expressions and propositions. Haas rejects this traditional notion, even in its propositional guise, by arguing that "'what a word means' is not a word-less idea. Nor is it a word-less physical fact."[2] Quine himself rejects an uncritical notion of fact as connotating "unvarnished objectivity plus a certain accessibility to observation"[3] as an entia non grata. It would seem that the traditional notion of translation, for all its intuitive weight, does not stand up under close scrutiny. Any notion of translation, we can see, then, is only as strong as its own theory of meaning. Traditional or intuitive notions of meaning clearly fail to adequately or accurately do justice to the linguistic realities when we try to use those notions in an explanatory way. In the next section I will begin to examine Quine's specific counter-

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[1] W. V. O. Quine, Ontological Relativity, p. 140.

[2] W. Haas, "The Theory of Translation," p. 214.

[3] W. V. O. Quine, Word and Object, p. 247.

proposals to this inadequate traditional notion of translation and its underlying theory of meaning.

# #8 Radical Translation and the Stimulus Theory of Meaning

Quine presents us with his theory of meaning within the context of what he calls radical translation. Radical translation is philosophically interesting because it lends itself to a certain indeterminacy which is something above and beyond the simple underdetermination of physical theory and/or the mere inscrutability of terms. Radical translation is also significant because, I believe, it seems to be often overlooked by people writing in reaction to Quine's theory of the indeterminacy of radical translation. For example, Young[1] and Kirk[2], to name only two, speak almost exclusively in terms of simple translation and I wonder if they and others don't think that not-radical translation might be indeterminate, which is not Quine's thesis.

It is, therefore, important to have a clear understanding of just what radical translation is and what its role is in the overall philosophy of Quine. In this section I want to examine this notion of radical translation in separation from Quine's thesis of indeterminacy of radical translation which is, conceptually, distinct from Quine's theory of meaning, the main topic of the present section.

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[1] Julian Young, "Rabbits," *Philosophical Studies*, 23 (1972), pp. 170-185.

[2] R. Kirk, "Underdetermination of Theory and Indeterminacy of Translation," *Analysis*, 33, No. 6, June, 1973.

In Chapter two of Word and Object, Quine writes that radical translation is the "recovery of a man's current language from his current observed responses . . . unaided by an interpreter."[1] Radical translation, as thus formulated, has two interesting aspects: it is based upon a behavioristic methodology of the observation of a stimulus-response situation and it depends upon no collateral information, i.e., it is "unaided by an interpreter."

In another place, Quine puts the matter in this way: "Imagine a newly discovered tribe whose language is without known affinities. The linguist has to learn the language directly by observing what the natives say under observed circumstances, encountered or contrived."[2] That is to say that radical translation is translation in a vacuum, i.e., without any general background scheme of translation to serve as a guide to the translator. Such general schemes of translation exist, from time immemorable, between, say, English, German, and Frisian on a rather basic level, since these language even share cognate word forms which help in translation from the one language to the other. Hungarian and English may share few, if any, cognate word forms as part of a general scheme of translation. But translation proceeds determinately because they do share a common cultural background which serves well enough as a scheme of translation. Quine also indicates that, although extreme radicalness may be approached from time to time, "The task is one that is not in practice undertaken in its extreme form, since a chain of interpreters of a sort can be recruited of marginal persons across the darkest archipelago."[1]

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[1] W. V. O. Quine, Word and Object, p. 28.

[2] W. V. O. Quine, Ontological Relativity, p. 1.

Whether or not the radical translation situation has or ever will actually be encountered is, I believe, beside the point. Presley seems to feel otherwise: "As radical translation is not known ever to have been undertaken, the absence of incompatible manuals of translation does not count against the principle of indeterminacy. Nevertheless, it might well be contended that until there are more conclusive arguments for it, the principle is to be taken as the incredible consequence of unsound premises."[2] Rather than see radical translation as the consequence of unsound premises, it must be taken as an explanation (premise) whose soundness, in accordance with the Quinian theory of evidence (see # 6), is established by

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[1] W. V. O. Quine, Word and Object, p. 28.

[2] C. F. Presley, "Willard Van Orman Quine" Encyclopedia of Philosophy Collier-Macmillan 7 (1967): 54.

the pragmatic value of the conclusions it allows us to draw. I think that we may profitably compare radical translation to the notion of social contract which was so much a part of political thought during the Enlightenment. Whether any group of people ever actually did come together and set up any form of a contract to govern their lives is entirely beside the point. What is relevant is the explanatory value of such an hypothesis.

The radical translation situation, like the social contract situation, is an "ideal" or extreme reference point which allows us to enter into areas of speculation hitherto unavailable. This is perfectly well accomodated by a scientific method as formulated within the scope of a pragmatic positivism as expounded by Quine, which, as we have seen, Quine feels is perfectly adequate for accounting for all that needs accounting for. Other, more convincing parallels, from the physical sciences, are not hard to find. Ideal gases, absolute time and/or space, absolute rest, motion, etc., serve the same theory building function as does radical translation. The important thing is to discover what might happen *if* such a situation were to arise; and from that speculation we may be able to explain what actually *does* happen. In the case at hand that means what would happen when we attempt to translate some foreigner's language *without any general background scheme of translation*.

Rather than try to show that radical translation may actually occur, such as in the recent case of the discovery of a totally hitherto isolated tribe in the remote interior of the Phillipines, I would like to suggest that, even in the case of meeting a Martian or some such science-fictional creature, radical translation would not occur so long as the linguist assumes that translation is at all possible. For such an assumption is, actually, a general background scheme. The quote from Quine above referring to the darkest archipelago, indicates that schemes of translation and, therefore, radicalness of translation, among other things, is a matter of degree. The greater or lesser the degree of radicalness, the greater or lesser the preciseness of the background scheme (and the greater or lesser the degree of indeterminacy).

Indeed, the most interesting example of radical translation comes from a highly theoretical, complex, and, in some sense, unnatural situation: the translation of number theory into set theory.[1] As in the case of the explication of ordered pairs, there are many possible alternatives to choose from when we desire to "translate" number theory into set theory. The "correctness" of any given translation depends upon the general scheme of translation. In the case of number theory this scheme would depend upon the particular method of the "translator". So, if, for example, one were to follow Von Neumann and identify each natural number, including zero, with the set of numbers smaller than it, then the sentence "Three is a member of five" would be true. But the same sentence would be false if one followed Zermelo and identified zero with the null set and all other natural numbers, n, with the set whose member is n-1.

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[1] Gilbert Harman, "An Introduction to 'Translation and Meaning' Chapter Two of Word and Object," in Words and Objections, Donald Davidson and Jaakko Hintikka, eds., (Dordrecht-Holland: Reidel, 1969), pp. 14-26.

For all its drawbacks, this particular example is most valuable in showing that there is no asking whether three is a member of five until one has specified the particular scheme to be used. Until such specification has been made a radical translation situation holds and translation must be indeterminate. In such a situation, there is no question of correctness or incorrectness in any given translation of number theory into set theory as long as the translation preserves the theorems of number theory. There is no objective matter to be correct or incorrect about.

The notion of radical translation is important for at least two reasons: In the first place, as we have already seen, a traditional theory of translation and its supporters, would insist that correct translation, like analyticity, is entirely a matter of meaning which is not dependent on any particular general scheme of translation. If Quine can meke a good case for his theory of radical translation and its indeterminacy then a serious threat is posed to those who would develop a "science of intentions"[1] that is a science of mental entities.

In the second place, Quine writes, "Thinking in terms of radical translation of exotic languages has helped make factors vivid, but the main lesson to be derived concerns the empirical slack in our own beliefs."[2] "Empirical slack" here refers to either the underdetermination of physical theory or the inscrutability of reference. These two are used to press the thesis of indeterminacy or radical translation from above and below, respectively.[3] This crucial empirical slack is explained in terms of Quine's theory of meaning.

The stimulus theory of meaning grows out of Quine's notion of radical translation with its emphasis on the methodology of behaviorism. By observing a man's dispositions to assent or dissent to or from sentences accompained by non-verbal stimulation, the linguist is able to make an entry into the language of the native even if he has no guide or general scheme of translation to help him; i.e., even if it is a radical translation situation.

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[1] W. V. O. Quine, Word and Object, p. 221.

[2] W. V. O. Quine, Word and Object, p. 78.

[3] W. V. O. Quine, "On the Reasons for Indeterminacy of Translation," Journal of Philosophy, LXVII (1970): 183.

It is important to remember that this entry is made through sentences, not words or propositions which are some kind of extra-linguistic entity giving substance to linguistic expressions. The sentences which provide the means of entry into the foreign language must, moreover, be responses to non-verbal stimulations because only in that way can one achieve any degree of objectivity in determining what the stimulus meaning is. This insistance on the non-verbal stimulation as the starting point is invoked in order to tie the linguist to observational situations. A Martian could certainly come to the conclusion that "Bachelor" and "Unmarried man" were "equivalent" expressions. But if his examination of the English language were entirely restricted to situations wherein only these two sentences were uttered and affirmed or denied, he would never be able to come to an understanding of the stimulus-meaning of those expressions.

The affirmative stimulus meaning for a sentence is "the class of all stimulations . . . that would prompt . . . assent . . . We may define the negative stimulus meaning similarly with 'assent' and 'dissent' interchanged, and then define the stimulus meaning as the ordered pair of the two."[1]

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[1] W. V. O. Quine, Word and Object, pp. 32-33.

So defined, stimulus meaning is subject to change with person, time, or modulus. The modulus is the "bound, a working standard of what to count as specious present."[1]

Immediately, it can be seen that Quine's theory of stimulus meaning has no need to make appeal to meanings as extra-linguistic entities.

One reason for this situation is that stimulus meaning "isolates a sort of net empirical import of each of various single sentences without regard to the containing theory, . . . without loss of what the sentence owes to that containing theory."[2] And so the entry into a language is made at the level of occasion sentences of high observationality as opposed to standing sentences of low observationality.

Occasion sentences such as "Red" or "Rabbit" are those sentences which call for assent or dissent only in those cases where the linguist makes a query after an appropriate stimulation. Standing sentences are those which may continue to evoke assent or dissent, upon query, even in the absence of appropriate stimulation. Such would be the case in "He has a new car." We might extend this temporal relation of a sentence to appropriate stimulation to the degree of "eternal sentences" which are always assented to or dissented from as in the case of "Copper is a metal."

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[1] W. V. O. Quine, Word and Object, p. 28.

[2] W. V. O. Quine, Word and Object, pp. 34-35.

Now, all sentences, from the extreme occasion and to the extreme "eternal" end "contain" stimulus meaning. But, obviously, the sentences on the occasional end of the continuum are more susceptible to prompted assent and dissent and so the stimulus meaning of highly occasional sentences is closer to the intuitive notion of meaning.

Quine gives a hypothetical situation wherein the linguist comes to "learn" the stimulus meaning of native occasion sentences, such as "Gavagai" which the linguist has observed the native uttering upon being confronted with the stimulation to which English speakers would respond "Rabbit" There are many incidental matters about the length of the modulus of the stimulation, the center of focus, the native terms for assent and dissent, and so on. But having dealt with these in common-place behavioral ways, Quine goes on to make the important observation that sameness of stimulus meaning is not the same thing as synonymy because "an informant's assent to or dissent from "Gavagai?" can depend excessively on prior collateral information as a supplement to the present prompting stimulus."[1]

This situation helps clarify why Quine insists on rejecting the sameness of meaning relationship as presumed in both translation and analyticity: "My rejection of the analyticity notion just means drawing no line between what goes into the mere understanding of the sentences of a language and what else the community sees eye-toeye on. I doubt that an objective distinction can be made between meaning and such collateral information as is community-wide."[1]

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[1] W. V. O. Quine, Word and Object, p. 37.

The more occasional a sentence is, the less susceptible it is to collateral information. "Red" is more susceptible than "Rabbit" and "Rabbit" is more susceptible than "Bachelor", which means that more collateral information is likely to be a part of the stimulus meaning of the latter than of the former. Therefore, sameness of stimulus meaning for "Red" comes closer to our intuitive notion of synonymy.

Occasion sentences can be further specified in terms of observationality. Observation sentences are occasion sentences which "wear their meanings on their sleeves . . . . . whose stimulus meanings vary none under the influence of collateral information."[2] But observationality, like so much, is a matter of degree and it stretches out to embrace even some standing sentences such as "The tide is out." From the point of view of radical translation, the important thing is to remember that the higher the degree of observationality the more determinate will be our translation in terms of stimulus meaning.

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[1] W. V. O. Quine, Ontological Relativity, p. 86.

[2] W. V. O. Quine, Word and Object, p. 42.

Two important comments on observationality: (i) stimulus meaning is a strictly subjective and private matter. Observationality, on the other hand is objective and public. Hence it is in terms of observation sentences that we can expect determinate translation, even in a radical situation, because there is an objective matter to be right or wrong about. (ii) The second point is that an observation sentence is not to be considered as implying any kind of sense dataism or phenomenalism. Quine, as behaviorist and physicalist, insists that observation sentences begin with ordinary things not with unvarnished sense data.

Now, on the end away from observational sentences we find first non-observational sentences and then theoretical sentences; e.g., "Bachelor" and "Momentum", respectively. These sentences, like all sentences, have a stimulus meaning. But the stimulus meaning is increasingly a subjective and private matter as the degree of observationality decreases. Quine indicates two interesting factors of all non-observation sentences which contribute to the random character of the stimulus meaning of these sentences from speaker to speaker. The first factor is that non-observation sentences are learned derivatively through sets of sentence-to-sentence connections. (See the section on definition, especially contextual definition, in chapter I, above.) The second factor is that each individual has a private personal history of language learning which differs from all other individuals.

It is for these reasons that sameness of stimulus meaning is adequate for an intuitive notion of synonymy only intrasubjectively. It is for these same reasons that determinate radical translation is confined to the highly observational sentences where sameness of stimulus meaning accords well with our intuitive notion of synonymy:

> Translation of 'Soltero' as 'Bachelor' manifestly cannot be predicated identity of stimulus meanings between speakers; nor can synonymy of 'Bachelor' and 'Unmarried man.'[1]

So far we have been concerned with sentential attitudes. Quine holds that words or terms are learned only through a process of abstraction or generalization from sentences which have already been learned in ways outlined above. Stimulus synonymy of "one word" sentences, such as "Rabbit" and "Gavagai" does not guarantee either the stimulus synonymy of the terms "rabbit" and "gavagai" nor even the co-extensiveness of those terms' referents. It is at this point that we encounter the inscrutability of terms in all its force. Having decided to treat "gavagai" as a term, there is no way we can determine, on the basis of observation of native responses to appropriate stimulation, whether "gavagai" refers to a rabbit, a rabbit stage, rabbithood, or an undetatched rabbit part.

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[1] W. V. O. Quine, Word and Object, p. 46.

When learning stimulus meanings of sentences, we depend upon prompted assent or dissent. When learning the reference of terms we depend not upon prompted responses but upon questions of identity, diversity, concepts of "belonging to", etc. In English, the tools to accomplish this reference are the articles, pronouns, singular and plural appratus, the copula, and the identity predicate. To make any sense of term synonymy it is necessary to master the apparatus of reference in a given language. In the radical translation situation, mastery of such apparatus comes after the determinate translation of the stimulus meanings of highly observational occasion sentences. Such apparatus, moreover, is gained only after the linguist has formed what Quine calls analytical hypotheses, and, for this reason, the translation of that apparatus is indeterminate.

Within a given language, however, where the functions "all", "are", and "=" have been settled already, it is, indeed, possible to make sense of the notion of term synonymy in terms of stimulus synonymy. But this falls far short of the intuitive notion of term synonymy which upholders of a more traditional view would expect or even demand.[1]

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[1] W. V. O. Quine, Word and Object, pp. 54-55.

With the background material now at hand, it is possible for us to make sense of the common intuitive appeal of sameness of meaning as it appears in traditional notions of translation, synonymy and even analyticity. Quine would say this intuitive bias is a matter of how we learned our language, both sentence and term; language of high observationality is learned in a different way than the way we learn sentences, and terms abstracted from them, of low observationality. In the former case we learn the sentences through ostension or what Russell would call acquaintance. In the latter case we learn sentences derivatively, contextually, or, in Russell's terminology, descriptively. Sentences, and terms abstracted from them, of the second sort are linguistically anchored, perhaps very indirectly, to observation sentences. We have come to explain this as a sameness of meaning, and have allowed ourselves to slip into uncritical ways of thinking and speaking. In fact, the connection between the former and the latter is established through a normal process of transference of learned response patterns to new stimulus patterns.

Finally, with this background, we are able to make more complete sense of Putnam's theory of cluster and non-cluster terms mentioned above in Chapter I. Quine himself states that Putnam's theory is in basic accord with his own though not as detailed. According to Quine, there are three sorts of terms: (i) observational, e.g., "rabbit"; (ii) non -

observational, e.g., "bachelor"; and (iii) theoretical, e.g., "momentum".[1] Quine feels that Putnam's cluster terms include both (i) and (iii), whereas his non-cluster terms cover what Quine calls non-observational terms. In this way Quine hopes to show that Putnam's attempt to justify a limited sense of analyticity (and, therefore, by implication, a limited form of determinate radical translation above the level that Quine is willing to allow) is on the right track, but lacking in detail and empirical support.

An interesting question is whether such terms as "justice" are theoretical or non-observational or what. In all of his works, Professor Quine is notably silent concerning matters of ethics or value theory. One reason for this is that Quine feels that, intuitively, it is notoriously difficult to come to any sort of broad agreement in axiological matters.[2] Professor Quine does, however, express hope that with the tools of behaviorism and philosophy, as we have been explicating it, we can render ethics into a more exact science deriving much of its methodology and substance from biology, sociology and psychology. Professor Quine feels that one of the highlights of Wilson's theory of sociobiology is the hope it offers in such matters.[2]

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[1] W. V. O. Quine, Word and Object, note, p. 57.

[2] Private conversation with Wilard Van Orman Quine, Professor of Philosophy (retired), Harvard University, 22 November 1978.

Such terms as "justice", then, would best be taken as theoretical terms which are part of the as yet developing science of ethics.

One final notion and we can summarize Quine's radical translation theory as well as his theory of meaning. This notion is that of a stimulus-analytic sentence, which is a sentence a person would assent to, if he would assent to anything, after every stimulation, within the modulus. An example of such a sentence would be: "There have been black dogs." It is immediately obvious that stimulus-analyticity does no justice to the intuitive notion of analyticity we discussed in Chapter I.

With that notion in hand, we can now go on to the major results of the linguists efforts upon confronting a native in a radical translation situation. We find that there are three areas worth noting: (i) Observation sentences can be translated; (ii) Stimulus-analytic sentences can be recognized; (iii) "Questions of intrasubjective stimulus synonymy of native occasion sentences even of non-observational kind can be settled if raised, but the sentences cannot be translated."[1]

In Word and object, Quine did, in fact, allow for the determinate translation of logical truth functions. In later works he came to admit that there were difficulties with the truth functional conectives[1] and so it would be both more convenient and consistent to eliminate consideration of them at this time.

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[1] W. V. O. Quine, Word and Object, p. 68.

We can say, then, in brief summary, that determinate translation of occasion sentences in a radical situation can be achieved if it is possible to establish an approximate identification of stimulus meanings. This task, Quine feels, is wholly within the capability of any proficient linguist in his role of physical scientist. Anything beyond this level is subject to indeterminacy.

What lies beyond this level? Well, besides the logical connectives, we also have quantification theory and, of course, almost all theoretical discourse. Such discourse is indeterminate because it is entered only after one establishes what Quine calls analytical hypotheses which have not enough objectivity about them to allow for determinate translation. But more of them in the next section.

To conclude this section, I would like to dare to give a brief explication of meaning in Quinian terms: Meaning is the perceived linguistic relationships and interconnections for those terms or linguistic expressions learned derivatively and stimulus meaning for those terms and linguistic expressions learned through ostension. This "definition" is brief and inadequate only if the reader take it in isolation from the rest of this section and, indeed, in isolation from the rest of this thesis.

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[1] W. V. O. Quine, "Philosophical Progress in Language Theory," Metaphilosophy, 1 (January 1970): 12.

## #9 Underdetermination of Physical Theory, Indeterminacy of Radical Translation, and Inscrutability of Reference

We have already seen that the indeterminacy of radical translation is something beyond the mere underdetermination of physical theory and/or the inscrutability of reference. Quine is clear about this, though many of his critics and even his supporters seem to be unaware of this additional aspect of the indeterminacy of translation thesis or unaware of its significance. In his "Reply to Chomsky" Quine says:

> Though linguistics is of course a part of the theory of nature, the indeterminacy of translation is not just inherited as a special case of the underdetermination of our theory of nature. It is parallel but additional.[1]

In respect to the inscrutability of reference, Quine writes the following: "The *gavagai* example was at best an example of the inscrutability of terms, not of the indeterminacy of translation that was unique to sentences."[2]

The question now is whether or not this claim can be supported and sustained. I feel that Quine has made a strong enough position for himself that those interested in refuting

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[1] W. V. O. Quine, "Reply to Chomsky," in *Words and Objections*, p. 303.

[2] W. V. O. Quine, "On the Reasons for Indeterminacy of Translation," p. 182.

him have a sizable project before them. I would like now to clarify the relationship between these three notions and Quine's overall philosophy.

In the first place, to fully understand the indeterminacy of radical translation, we must introduce one final notion within Quine's theory of meaning: analytical hypothesis. Analytical hypotheses are the hypotheses of second intention. They concern themselves about language whereas "non-analytical" hypotheses concern themselves with extra-linguistic (extra-theoretic) "matters of fact." Analytical hypotheses are what the field linguist uses to gain entry into the areas of theoretical speculation which lie above and beyond the determinate realm which he mastered through observation and stimulus meaning. In a rather over-schematic fashion, we might begin by saying that the linguist first isolates convenient segments of the native language and declares these to be "words". These are then hypothetically equated with certain English words and/or phrases so that all the sentences they imply include those observation sentences determinately translated through approximate identification of stimulus meaning. Moreover, these analytical hypotheses should give rise to stimulus analytic sentences in the native language which, within certain limits of tolerance, translate into stimulus analytic sentences in English. Finally, the analytic hypotheses should carry pairs of sentences that are stimulus synonymous in the native language into English sentences that are also stimulus-synonymous.

Actually, Quine tells us, the analytical hypotheses begin almost at the very outset of the radical translation process. It is they that provide a tentative general scheme of translation. Analytical hypotheses do not have an equational form and may be accompanied by additional information or instructions to refer to certain noteworthy contexts. It is also through analytical hypotheses that the linguist identifies grammatical constructions and word categories in the native language.

Now, how do these analytical hypotheses go beyond underdetermination of physical theory? The underdetermination of physical theory simply states that various theories could all agree with the available, or even possible, data you yet disagree with each other in essential points.

As we have seen, radical translation begins with observation. The linguist equates various sentences of the two languages by means of an approximate identification of stimulus meaning. At this level, the linguist is still a physical scientist and so his theory, inductively arrived at is subject to the normal underdetermination of all theory. But now, to get beyond this basic level of observation sentences, the linguist begins to make analytical hypotheses,

> whose ultimate justification is substantially just that the implied observation sentences match up. But now the same old empirical slack, the old indeterminacy between physical theories, recurs in second intension.[1]

We can see, then, that indeterminacy is sort of like underdetermination "squared", that is, raised to the second power. It recurs in second intension. The native is already underdetermined in his physical theory. That underdetermination not only carries over into our linguist's language but it is deepened by the hypothetical nature of his analytical hypotheses. The linguist hypothesizes about language which reflects hypothesization about reality. This radical translation is, therefore, twice removed from reality and hence the indeterminacy of radical translation. The determinate translation made at the observational level offers no help because "Our translation of his observation sentences no more fixes our translation of his physical theory than our own possible observations fix our own physical theory."[2]

The connection between underdetermination and indeterminacy has one other interesting aspect: the degree of underdetermination "determines" the degree of indeterminacy. To the extent that you see physical theory underdetermined, to

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[1] W. V. O. Quine, "On the Reasons for Indeterminacy of Translation," p. 179.

[2] W. V. O. Quine, "On the Reasons for Indeterminacy of Translation," p. 180.

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that extent will you see radical translation as inderterminate.

The "gavagai" example, as we have seen, is an example of the inscrutability of reference. Indeterminacy of translation arises when we try to settle that inscrutability of reference. In this case, the analytical hypotheses are not hypotheses about other hypotheses (i.e., the hypotheses of physical theory) but rather hypotheses about the apparatus of reference. The relationships, therefore, between underdetermination and indeterminacy and inscrutability and indeterminacy are not the same. Indeed, Quine, says, inscrutability may, sometimes, lend itself to determinate translation:

> This whole effort of the "gavagai" example was aimed not at proof but at helping the reader to reconcile the indeterminacy of translation imaginatively with the concrete reality of radical translation. . . . the inscrutability of terms need not always bring indeterminacy of sentence translation in its train.[1]

It is because of this difference tetween underdetermination and inscrutability that Quine says that the one presses from above but the other from below.

One final observation about the indeterminacy of radical translation: like so many other notions within Quine's

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[1] W. V. O. Quine, "On the Reasons for Indeterminacy of Translation," p. 182.

pragmatic positivism the indeterminacy of radical translation is a matter of degree. The following quotation brings out that feature as well as the relation between indeterminacy and underdetermination in a fairly clear fashion:

> The linguist's decision as to what to treat as native signs of assent and dissent is on a par with the analytical hypotheses of translation that he adopts at later stages of his enterprise; they differ from those later ones only in coming first, needed as they are in defining stimulus meaning. This initial indeterminacy, then, carries over into the identification of stimulus meanings. In addition there is in the identification of stimulus meanings. meanings the normal uncertainty of induction, though, as stressed in my reply to Chomsky, this is not what the indeterminacy thesis is about. And finally there are the linguist's later adoptions of analytical hypotheses, undetermined still by what he takes to be the native signs of assent and dissent, and undetermined still by all the stimulus meanings. As Dreben has well remarked, the indeterminacy of translation comes in degrees.[1]

Well, presuming a case has been made for the indeterminacy of radical translation, what is its significance? In the overall philosophy of Quine the indeterminacy thesis is most important for its role in combatting the science of the mental. Indeterminacy is one of Quine's ways of trying to show that there is no extra-linguistic entity such as a meaning or a proposition which stands beyond sentences. If determinate translation in the radical situation is actually

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[1] W. V. O. Quine, "Reply to Hintikka," in Words and Objections, p. 312.

possible, then it must be so because of those meanings. Moreover, if those meanings exist in the uncritical and intuitive sense which Quine so strongly denies, then analyticity will become a viable alternative. Indeterminacy of radical translation is, then, a kind of natural outcome of Quine's pragmatic, positivistic, and behavioristic background: experience, observation, ordinary things are the touchstones of all scientific inquiry. Appeal to such mentalistic and extra-linguistic entities as meanings and propositions is, for Quine, bad science and bad philosophy.

## #10 Towards a Theory of Translation

Quine's attack on analyticity and determinacy of translation is less important in itself than in its consequences. One of the chief consequences is an undermining of the "museum myth". According to this notion, meanings are unchanging entities which may be tagged or labelled, much like museum exhibits, differently in different languages. Another important result which is frequently overlooked is a change in traditional metaphilosophical theory - a change in what is seen as the business of being a philosopher. Quine's theory of the indeterminacy of radical translation is a paradigm of the scientific philosopher's activity: challenging uncritical and intuitive ways, of conceptualizing and verbalizing. Quine does not deny the "reality" of translation, nor does he deny the possibility of "good" or "correct" translations. In this section I hope to offer some of the insights and outlooks which an adoption of the Quinian theory allows us to make and which are, I feel, of distinct scientific (and therefore philosophic) value because they help in explaining the past and predicting the future - that is they help us in theory building, especially theory building concerning meaning and translation.

Quine is an admitted pragmatist. And though he does not think that this is the only way to organize experience and build a theory, he realizes that it helps to solve one of the great controversies in the history of thought: namely the nature of scientific standards of judgments. The controversy is a manifestation of the dualistic tension that results from an uncritical acceptance of market-place language. It is a tension between internal and innately subjective ideas, and external and learned objective behavior. Once language was seen to be a socially inculcated behavior, an "objective" science of meaning became much more viable. Although Descartes' innate ideas were rejected by Locke and his positivistic descendents, including Quine, our looking at language through behavioristically colored glasses allows and even postulates innate - i.e., genetic or biologically specifiable - apparatus for language learning. The major difference between innate ideas and innate learning apparatus is that the latter can be, to a certain degree, objectively, defined. By utilizing and monitoring the instincts for mimicry, babbling, and an innate "quality space" (i.e.,an innate faculty for determining similarities and differences), we are able to learn language *and* learn how we learn language. Having done so, we come to see that language is a complex structure of dispositions to verbal behavior in the presence of appropriate and public stimulations. All this is to underline the Quinian position already stated in previous sections that there is nothing in meaning that is not also in behavior. That is to say that there would be no way of achieving an objective theory about meaning if they were unchanging states or entities as the museum myth would have it. All this is to say that translation must be somthing other than the identification and preservation of some non-linguistic entity, call it a meaning or a proposition or whatever.

This tension between the subjective and the objective becomes most significantly obvious in the radical translation situation, which, Quine admits, has the status of merely a Gedankenexperiment. The radical translation situation is also important in that even those who agree with Quine in rejecting uncritical notions of ideas and/or propositions, still seem to have a tendency to speak uncritically of determinate translation, which Quine equates with the acceptance of those very ideas and/or propositions.[2]

Because the status of the radical translation situation is that of a Gedankenexperiment, one comes clearly to realize that there is a need for approaching the matter of semantics with the empirical spirit of natural science.

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[1] W. V. O. Quine, "Philosophical Progress in Language Theory," P. 5.

[2] W. V. O. Quine, The Roots of Reference, (La Salle: Open Court, p. 36.

Now the fact of the matter is that Quine allows for determinate (non-radical or critical) translation and wants to further facilitate this very necessary and valuable activity. We have also seen that it is not inaccurate to say that the radical translation situation never really does occur andthat the heart of radical translation are the analytical hypotheses. If we agree, then, that radical translation does not really occur, we are, in effect, saying that we don't really form analytical hypotheses in the every-day business of translating. And to say *that* is simply to say that *we already assume a general scheme of translation to begin with.* In developing a theory of translation that is determinate (non-radical and critical), then, we must indicate what such general schemes of translation are like, and how they differ from analytical hypotheses.

I would like to suggest that, in general, a general scheme of translation differs from analytical hypotheses in that the general scheme is systematic (more or less), tested by long use, and the product of a long and remote history of the species. In a previous section I compared the notion of radical translation to the notion of social contract. The comparison is interesting also because it is very plausible in light of contemporary **anthropological theories to suppose** that once, long ago, there were distinct groups of speaking hominids each living in separation from some or all of the other groups. It is also possible to conceive of something very much like the radical translation situation occuring when two of these groups of different speaking hominids eventually came into contact. It might even be possible that neither group had even the very general scheme of translation that the other group could also speak and communicate since each group may never have had experience with other groups of speaking hominids while having much experience with other groups of non-speaking hominids. This would be a more or less "classic" example of the radical translation situation as well as the remote history of modern human languages and their general schemes of translation that accompany them. The purpose of this Gedankenexperiment is to show that even if translation historically began in such a radical situation and had to depend upon analytical hypotheses to get going at all, once these analytical hypotheses had been established and translation, indeterminate though it was, begun, the long and continued association of the groups would eventually lead to the acceptance of those analytical hypotheses as tested and true, if only as a matter of convenience. These original analytical hypotheses would eventually become more systematic, unquestioned, uncritical and intuitive until we have, as nowadays, general schemes of translation.

But, within the limits of this Gedankenexperiment, we might speculate that there would never even have been the necessity for any analytical hypotheses because at the time of the meeting of the two groups of speaking hominids, neither had developed beyond the observational level of speaking.

This treatment of analytical hypotheses and their relation to determinate translation is of a piece with Quine's theory of evidence:

> Just as we may meaningfully speak of the truth of a sentence only within the terms of some theory or conceptual scheme . . . so, on the whole we may meaningfully speak of interlinguistic synonymy only within the terms of some particular system of analytical hypotheses.[1]

A general scheme of translation is, then, an accepted system of analytical hypotheses. Why, or in what sense, accepted? In the same sense that we accept any theory or explanation: because it works. Analytical hypotheses, of course, lack "strict inevitability".[2] But as we accept more and more of those analytical hypotheses and form them, gradually, into a system, our choice of future analytical hypotheses becomes more and more limited unless we are willing to make changes and revisions of those already accepted. The general scheme of translation is an inductively built theory about how we and others use language. It is subject to the usual underdetermination and inscrutability so long as we do not posit eternal and extra-linguistic entities underlying our language or other languages.

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[1] W. V. O. Quine, Word and object, p. 75.

[2] W. V. O. Quine, "Philosophical Progress in Language Theory," p. 10.

At first analytical hypotheses are accepted for the flimsiest of reasons: they are short and convenient (the "Gestalt law"), or because they satisfy the rule of simplicity and conservatism, or maybe even because they occured to us before any others did.

But, it may be objected, all of this is rather subjective. General schemes of translation are adopted only insofar as "we" can make sense, in "our" terms, of what "they" seem to be saying. To say this seems to be saying that there is no sense to alk of an "objective" meaning of the matter which, of course, is what Quine has been saying right along.

Having given up the myth of the museum, we can deal with such subjectivity and adequately explain how it is that we do, in fact, come to translate the foreigner's language. First and foremost, of course, are observation sentences, stimulus analytic sentences, and stimulus synonymous sentences. These act as the most basic check points in determinate translation. Another checkpoint for the determinacy (i.e., acceptability) of translation is the logical connective of negation, which is not to be confused with the grammatical rule. In learning to translate logical negation we get a good idea of how determinate translation is achieved, according to Quine. Take, for example, the negative English response to the question "Did he go?", namely "No, he didn't." Only lovers of paradox or those with too little experience and observation of English speakers would insist upon adhering to the logical rule of double negation and interpret that answer affirmatively. To answer "No, he went." is, in fact, much closer to logical notation, but manifestly "ungrammatical" English. The conclusion: one of the features of a good scheme of translation is that it preserves our logic. Quine is clear on this again:

> That a fair translation preserves logical laws is implicit in practice even where, to speak paradoxically, no foreign language is involved. Thus when to our querying of an English sentence an English speaker answers 'Yes and no', we assume that the queried sentence is meant differently in the affirmation and negation; this rather than that he would be so silly as to affirm and deny the same thing. Again, when someone espoused a logic whose laws are ostensibly contrary to our own, we are ready to speculate that he is just giving some familiar old vocables ('and', 'or', 'not', 'all', etc.) new meanings. This talk of meaning is intuitive, uncritical and undefined, but it is a piece with translation: what it registers is our reluctance under such circumstances to 'translate' the speaker's English into our English by the normal tacit method of homophonic translation.[1]

We can conclude, then, that strange translations are a matter of differences in language which we have not yet been able to grasp rather than differences among strange ontological entities which we must somehow set out to discover. "Other things being equal, the more literal translation is

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[1] W. V. O. Quine, Word and Object, p. 59,

seen as more literally a translation."[1]

But logic is not the only thing that we are to preserve in determinate translation. We are also to preserve the "homliness" of our own language; that is we are to preserve our own world view insofar as that is possible: "The linguist has to assume that the native will see the main distinctions that we do."[2]

But what if the native has a radically different world view? How can we then translate his language correctly and still preserve any sense of homeliness? In light of what has been said above, these questions make no sense. How are to learn of the natives world view except through translating his language. And if we insist in translating extreme strangeness we manifest our own stubborness rather than the native's strangeness:

> . . . one reflects again in method and recalls that implausibility of native doctrine systematically detracts from plausibility of translation. . . . If we find a language hard to translate, if we find very little word-by-word isomorphism with genuine and idiomatic English, then we already have right there. . . a kind of measure of remoteness. . . But if as a second step a translation into funny or compromise English is undertaken in order

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[1] W. V. O. Quine, Word and Object, p. 75.

[2] W. V. O. Quine, "Philosophical Progress in Language Theory," p. 16.

> to reveal the exotic native Welttanschuung, then no conclusion deserves to be drawn until some methodological account is taken of how the English compromise was struck.

All this is not to say that there can be no strange native world views. What it says is that those world views, whatever they be, will accord with public observations (the underdetermination of physical theory) and not do violence to the basic fundamentals of elementary logic. We will expect, then, to find less strangeness among the observation sentences, and more possibility of such strangeness the deeper into theory we move. Moreover, a good translator will realize that theories are groups of sentences which hang together and which face the tribunal of experience as a group, unlike observation sentences which fact that tribunal singly. For this reason the good translator will not make the mistake of assuming that theoretical sentences can be translated singly. We must never forget that "strangeness" is relative and subjective, and that "we" must appear just as strange to "them" as "they" do to "us".

Making a good translation, then, is matter of mastering the general scheme of translation for the subject matter to be translated. First of all, that means a familiarity with the standard manuals of translation for the two languages

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[1] W. V. O. Quine, "Philosophical Progress in Language Theory," p. 16.

under consideration (presuming them already to exist). Here consideration must be given for temporal relevancy: using grammars and dictionaries from the previous century will not assure a good translation. Ideally, this means that the translator should be bi-lingual. Since bi-lingualism is a skill capable of greater or lesser degrees of perfection, we can then say that the more bi-lingual one is the more likely he is to produce a good translation. Secondly, if the translator is working with a deeply theoretical subject matter, he will be a better translator the more familiar he is with the theory involved. Bi-lingual philosophers should translate philosophy, and bi-lingual doctors translate medical works. The philosopher and the doctor should not translate each other's material, all else being equal. Finally, since bi-lingualism is rarely equally balanced, that is, since most bi-linguals are more proficient in one or the other of the languages they speak - if merely on points of stylistic acceptability - all other things being equal, we can expect that translation to be better which is done by the "owner" of a language. We would expect, then, the best results by having a Thai who is fluent in English translate from English into Thai and not vice-versa.

These conclusions may seem common-place, and the question may arise as to how they differ from intuitive theories of determinate translation. They differ only in their theoretical background - the observational results remain the same. The difference is that what Quine sees as being preserved during the activity of translation is not an idea or a proposition but rather the general scheme of the translator himself. And if I were to make a dividing line between the good and the very good translators, I would say that it was a recognition of this fact of the nature of the translation activity.