→ *Channeling, Dance, Dream, Ecstasy, Enthusiasm, Intoxication/Drugs/Hallucinogens, Music, Possession, Psyche, Rhythm, Shamanism, Vision/Auditory Experience*

Frank Maurice Welte

Transcendence

Transcendence is originally a philosophical concept that distinguishes the immediately accessible, differentiated world of reality from a foundational space that lies behind it. The theological theme of God's quality as a reality 'beyond' was open to a corresponding development, which has indeed been realized. Since antiquity, transcendence is essentially a space reached neither by sensory perception nor by speech. Thus, God remains in the realm of the ineffable. Approaches to the transcendent God belong to 'negative theology,' which generates its propositions by way of negations.

Boundaries Drawn An application of this concept in terms of the study of religion can take as its point of departure the fact that all systems of religious symbols find a boundary between the approachable and the unapproachable, the controllable and the uncontrollable. But it is not to be assumed that the areas thus set in mutual relation lead to the same propositions in all religions, or even that they are used with constancy and consistency in the same religion. Instead, variable, and multifariously vague, boundaries present themselves, in some instances in a multiplicity of areas. Nor is it only a question of the being and quality of transcendence that is at issue. Also involved is the (ever asymmetrical) relation between the realm 'beyond' and the region 'here.'

Localization of Transcendence Transcendence can be variously located, most obviously in outer space. Thus, for example, cultivated space can be bounded off from uncultivated space, with varying positive or negative qualities. For example, the forest or → water can be seen as a realm of menace, or of life-promoting powers. The development of this space varies. Areas of the sky, or of the underworld, can be considered thematically, either in detail, or sparsely. Even the inner world of the human being (→ Soul), the region of ecstatic and uncontrolled experiences (→ Trance), offers an occasion for the localization of transcendence. In the dimension of time, the area before the beginning or after the end comes into question. Finally, transcendence can be considered in a context of transitory processes (→ Time), as the uncontrollable coincidence.

→ *God/Gods/The Sacred, Hereafter, Metaphysics, Place (Sacred), Religion, Theology*

Fritz Stolz

Translation

Insofar as → religion is a cross-cultural phenomenon—and because its academic study is international—translation is integral to its history and study. Yet scholars of religion rarely critically examine the creativity, limitations, or biases of translation. This omission is surprising given that complex rela-

tions between → language, → meaning, culture, and ideology clearly undermine the ideal of a simple, transparent correspondence between statements in different languages. Several issues present themselves here: the place of texts and translation in religion(s) and in the study of religion(s); the 'non-transparency' of translation and the inevitability of semantic distortion; ideological issues raised by relations between source and target cultures; and theoretical issues raised by claims of a common cross-cultural core that allegedly justifies the use of a generic concept of 'religion.'

The Focus on Texts

Texts are central to most religions, though entirely absent in others, and they are the primary religious materials for scholars of religion (→ Text/Textual Criticism; Writing). The study of 'religion' has consisted primarily of contextualized readings of selected texts from many cultures, above all 'sacred scriptures,' including revelation, theology, commentary, hagiography, creeds, legal codes, sectarian history, and devotional literature. Max Müller's translation of the *Upanishads* (1879), inaugurating the fifty-volume *Sacred Books of the East* series, was just one milestone marking the importance of translation to the development of the modern study of religion. Scholars have recently placed greater emphasis on non-scriptural phenomena, such as oral traditions, rituals, art, and architecture, but here too texts remain central, e.g., transcriptions of oral performances by the Haida story-teller Ghandl, instructions for ritual purification in the Zoroastrian *Avesta*, statements on iconoclasm by the ninth-century Christian Councils, or architectural norms in the medieval Hindu *Agamas*.

Insider and Outsider

The translation of religious texts has both insider and outsider dimensions. On the one hand, members of a given religion often belong to different linguistic and cultural groups, e.g., Muslims who read Indonesian or Turkish renderings of the *Qur'an*. On the other hand, scholars of religion work with and publish both primary and secondary sources in various languages. In all these cases, to translate is to transpose, transform, transfer or transplant: difference always intervenes between what can be said in any two languages, between educated and casual readers, and between the cultural, social, and political contexts of source and target languages. These same issues of translation are also raised by the transposition of texts within what is arguably a single language: from ancient to modern Greek, Chinese or Hebrew, or from Shakespeare's tongue into colloquial twenty-first-century English.

Technical Terms, Standardization, and Audience

Perhaps the most significant long-term translation project in history was the diffusion of Buddhist texts from Pali and Sanskrit into Tibetan and Chinese. Many of the translators, such as Kumarajiva, were widely esteemed for their genius. Three central issues in the translation of religious texts are illustrated by this centuries-long endeavor. First, the treatment of technical terms demanded the expression of ideas foreign to the intellectual traditions of the target languages. Early Chinese efforts used transliterations of Pali and Sanskrit terms or borrowed concepts from Daoism. There is a trade-off here beyond ease of comprehensibility and corruption of meaning. (Christians faced similar problems in translating 'Holy Spirit' into African languages, sometimes drawing on indigenous concepts for 'spirits' or 'wind' and sometimes importing Latin or other European loan words. The related decision to sometimes translate 'demons' using words for 'ancestors' underlines the role of ideology here.)

Second, the variety of solutions to problems of translation resulted in disparate renderings of the same or similar texts. Chinese and Tibetan translation efforts were generally piecemeal, with only limited use of more standardized approaches—as in the work of the seventh-century pilgrim and translator, Xuanzang. (In a variant of this problem, conservative Christian views that the Holy Spirit guided the writing of the Bible generally fail to note the correlated need for a theory of inspired translation, especially given the proliferation of modern-language English versions [Allert 1999].)

Third, these Buddhist translations varied greatly according to their intended audience. In China, for example, educated lay readers preferred paraphrases that used classical stylistic devices, where scholars preferred more literal versions. (Similar tensions exist among twentieth-century English translations of the Jewish Talmud. The recently-completed seventy-three-volume Schottenstein edition is aimed at a popular audience largely unfamiliar with Talmudic nuances, but scholars prefer the more literal Soncino edition or the JTS *El ʿAm* partial translation, with its lengthy critical commentary.)

Historicity and Colonialism

Scholars of Christian scriptures have also had a long fruitful engagement with issues of translation. Biblical scholars have paid admirable attention to developments in translation theory: e.g., formal vs. dynamic equivalence, implications of → discourse analysis, and cultural ideologies. This consideration is partly because the Christian Bible is always already in translation. (Most Christians believe that God became incarnate as a speaker of Aramaic. Yet the → Bible is in Hebrew and Greek.) Muslims and Orthodox Jews hold, respectively, that the → *Qurʾan* and the *Torah* are God's literal revelation in Arabic and in Hebrew. In contrast, the historically determinate diffusion of God's Word through translation has always been essential to Christianity, with the Bible now translated, in whole or in part, into almost 2,000 languages. Lamin Sanneh argues that Christianity's emphasis on "mission by *translation*" has led to a "radical pluralism of culture" that aims "to make the recipient culture the true and final locus of the proclamation" (1989, 1, 29). As a result, Christianity has sometimes empowered the languages and cultures of the colonized by invoking them as worthy vessels for the Word. Post-colonial theology has also highlighted less optimistic relations between translation and ideology. R. S. Sugirtharajah, for example, holds that European translators imposed alien textual values in South Asia (e.g., an emphasis on fixed texts as scriptural archetypes). He argues for "a wider intertextuality which will link biblical texts with Asian scriptural texts" (1998, 90-92).

Cultural Context and Ideology

Although discussions of translation have traditionally tended to focus on the extent to which a given translation is 'faithful' to an 'original,' recent theory of translation pays greater attention to issues of cultural context, ideology, and power relations between source and target cultures. The extent to which complex cultural issues intervene as texts are translated is illustrated by two cases involving gender. The Koiné Greek original of Rom 16:7, in the Christian *New Testament*, mentions 'Junia'—clearly a woman's name on the evidence of contemporary non-biblical texts—as 'prominent among the apostles.' Medieval translators and commentators frequently changed this name to the extremely unusual masculine form 'Junias.' The King James Version preferred the weaker 'of note,' rather than the more frequent 'prominent'

or 'outstanding.' Some modern commentators suggest that *epísêmoi en tois apostólois* is best rendered as 'well known *to* the apostles.' Many feminist scholars see, in this history of translation, a patriarchal erasure of women's participation in the early Church. A contrasting change occurred in East Asia from the seventh to tenth centuries CE. The male bodhisattva of compassion, Avalokiteshvara in Indian Sanskrit texts, became the male Chenrezig in Tibet (incarnate in the Dalai Lamas) but was transformed into the female Guanyin in China (Kannon in Japan, Kwanŭm in Korea, Quan'Am in Vietnam, and Kanin in Bali). This shift was prominent in iconography as well as in texts. The reasons for this transformation remain unclear, but culturally specific attitudes toward gender roles are clearly part of the story. The complex trajectories of these Christian and Buddhist figures remind us that, in translation, the linguistic surface invokes complex historical, cultural, and ideological depths.

Another complex set of translational boundaries involves distinctions between insider and outsider, between data and theory, between religions and their study. The history of the → academic study of religion is replete with examples of terms from a specific cultural context that come to be used as generic concepts for describing religious phenomena across cultures, e.g., tabu (→ Taboo), mana (→ Power), shaman (→ Shamanism), → sacrifice, spirit, → sin, grace. This act of cross-cultural categorization begs questions regarding the nature of the phenomena under study: applying common labels can blind us to differences. In addition, as J. Z. Smith, Russell T. McCutcheon, and others emphasize, the use of emic terms as etic concepts threatens to import biased presuppositions into the basic categories of religious studies.

The concept of → 'religion' itself is open to these critiques. Hans Penner, Nancy Frankenberry, and others have made theory of translation central to a semantic critique of essentialist views of religion. If all religions are characterized by participating in—or referring in some symbolic manner to—the sacred (→ Holy), and if the sacred is ineffable or wholly other, as phenomenologists often claim, then how does this trans-linguistic other come to be translated into the many languages of different religions? Translation is a relation, however complex, between spheres of determinate → meaning; but the generic, cross-cultural concept of 'religion' is hypostatized as beyond determinate meaning (unless it is defined in a reductive, functionalist, or purely descriptive manner). Translating between different religions is one thing; translating between religion and religions is something else entirely. Yet, unless we can make sense of the latter, how can we claim that all the things we call 'religions' truly fit under that one umbrella term? These sorts of critiques indicate that theory of translation has much to contribute to discussions of the nature and function of comparison as a method in the study of religion.

Critical Approaches in Religious Studies

Literature

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→ *Bible, Book, Communication, Literature, Meaning/Signification, Qur'an, Text/Textual Criticism*

Steven Engler

Trickster

What Is a Trickster?

1. The concept of the 'trickster' is a concept of figure typology. In the anthropology of religion, cultural anthropology, and literary studies, it expresses the being and activity of (usually male) mythical, literary, or historical (but now inserted into literature) figures, now more precisely identified as in human or animal form. In the eighteenth century, in English, 'trickster' meant someone of dubious morality and principles, but appreciable intelligence. English philosopher Shaftesbury (1671–1713) characterized (1711) → Prometheus as such—that is, as a deceptive 'quack' or dangerous 'swindler.' Trickster figures emerge in the mythology, folklore, and literature of nearly all cultures. The trickster's body and soul are, or become, identified to a certain extent through his actions.

Tricksters play their tricks by way of unusual incorporeal powers, for example, techniques of cunning and deceit, secret knowledge, and the arts of transmutation (→ Mask). Nonetheless, tricksters are 'foolish,' and their actions often miscarry or work against them, so that they also represent ungodly, disorganized areas, such as those of laughter and humor (→ Fool, Upside-down World, → Carnival). But they are also tied up with the comical and laughable; their actions caricature or ridicule anything serious or important. Trickster figures look strange and striking, which marks them as outsiders: unnatural bodily development, altered appetites (enormous hunger or digestion/excretion, or sexuality), enlarged or diminutive, multiple or missing, bodily (e.g., sexual) parts. Thus, with Wakdjunkaga (lit. the 'roguish one'), a trickster of the North American Winnebago people, his over-long penis is either backwards or rolled up. A squirrel casually gnaws off his sexual part and plants it: out of it grow useful or vital crops like maize, turnips, or (sweet) potatoes.[1] In François Rabelais's satirical serial novel *Gargantua and Pantagruel* (1522–1564), a modern-age literary match for a Trickster story-cycle, the protagonists are remarkable for their body size and proportions, their extremes of gluttony and intemperance, and their frivolously scatological earthiness. Some literary → animal legends in European culture are based on elements and figures of a trickster sort, such as the crafty, sly Fox or the Raven with the droll blotches. As trickster figures fail to abide even by biological norms, then, surely, we must expect them to transgress, at will, other, 'sacred,' boundaries—law, ceremony, convention—most often spontaneously, less often working from a plan, but always out of a craving for novelty. In this manner, they broaden their own latitudes, as well as the frames of standardization of those with whom they come in contact. Hence they are (further) designated as 'liminal' beings (→ Marginality/Liminality). On the basis of cunning and ridiculous craftiness, the trickster often appears as a cultural → hero, the one who brings down fire and other two-