Chapter 4

Friedrich Schleiermacher

ON THE DIFFERENT METHODS OF TRANSLATING

Translated by Susan Bernofsky

THAT UTTERANCES ARE TRANSLATED from one language to another is a fact we meet with everywhere, in the most diverse forms. If, on the one hand, men are thus brought together who were originally separated perhaps by the span of the earth's diameter, and if one language can become the receptacle of works written many centuries before in a tongue long since deceased, we need not, on the other hand, even go beyond the bounds of a single language to encounter the same phenomenon. For not only do the dialects of the different clans that make up a people, and the different ways a language or dialect develops in different centuries, already constitute different languages in a stricter sense, between which it is often enough necessary to translate; even contemporaries who share a dialect but belong to different classes that rarely come together in social intercourse and diverge substantially in their education are commonly unable to communicate save through a similar mediation. Yea, are we not often compelled to translate for ourselves the utterances of another who, though our compeer, is of different opinions and sensibility? Compelled to translate, that is, wherever we feel that the same words upon our own lips would have a rather different import than upon his, or at least weigh here the more heavily, there the more lightly, and that, would we express just what he intended, we must needs employ quite different words and turns of phrase; and when we examine this feeling more closely so that it takes on the character of thought, it would appear that we are translating. Indeed, we must sometimes translate our own utterances after a certain time has passed, would we make them truly our own again. This ability is employed not only to transplant to foreign soil the scientific and rhetorical accomplishments of a given tongue, thus

enlarging the sphere of their influence; it also enters into business transactions between different individual peoples and in diplomatic relations between independent governing bodies, each of which, by custom, speaks only its own language when addressing the others so as to maintain strict equality without their availing themselves of a dead language.

Still, not all that lies within this broad realm should play a role in our present inquiry. The compulsion to translate in response to a more or less momentary need will always be too confined to the moment in its effects to require other guidance than that of feeling; and if rules for this were to be given, they would have to be such as to produce a purely moral state of mind in which the spirit remains receptive even to what is most unlike itself. Let us set this case aside and restrict ourselves for the nonce to considering only translations from a foreign tongue into our own; here too we will be able to distinguish two separate areas – not clearly defined, to be sure, for that is rarely possible, but even these blurred boundaries will appear distinct enough if one examines the ultimate goals in either case. The interpreter plies his trade in the area of business, while the translator proper works above all in the areas of science and art. If these definitions appear arbitrary, interpretation being commonly understood to refer more to oral translation and translation proper to the written sort, may we be forgiven for choosing to use them thus out of convenience in the present instance, particularly as the two terms are not at all distant from one another. The areas of art and science are best served by the written word, which alone can make their works endure; and interpreting scientific or artistic products aloud would be just as useless as, it seems, impossible. For business transactions, however, writing is only a mechanical means; verbal negotiation is their original mode, and every written interpretation should be seen only as the record of a spoken exchange.

Bordering this area are two others closely akin to it in spirit and nature, yet given the great variety of objects embraced by them, they already form a transition to the areas of art, in the one case, and of science, in the other. For every negotiation involving an interpreter is an event whose particulars are set down in two different tongues. But even the translation of purely narrative or descriptive writings which merely transmits a previously described sequence of events into another tongue can still have much about it of the interpreter's trade. The less obvious the author's presence was in the original, and the more he served merely as an organ of apperception guided by his object's spatial and temporal organization, the more the translation will be a matter of mere interpreting. Thus the translator of newspaper articles and ordinary travel literature tends to make common cause with the interpreter, and it will soon become ridiculous if he claims for his work too high a status and wishes to be respected as an artist. The more, however, the author's own particular way of seeing and drawing connections has determined the character of the work, and the more it is organized according to principles that he himself has either freely chosen or that are designed to call forth a particular impression, the more his work will partake of the higher realm of art, and so too the translator must bring different powers and skills to his work and be familiar with his author and the author's tongue in a different sense than the interpreter. Every negotiation that uses an interpreter involves, as a rule, setting down a particular state of affairs within a specific framework; the interpreter is working only for the benefit

of participants sufficiently familiar with these affairs, and the phrases that express them in both languages are determined in advance either by law or by usage and mutually agreed-upon conventions. Quite a different matter are the sorts of negotiations that, although often similar in form to the conventional ones, are intended to establish new frameworks. The less the latter can themselves be considered specific instances of a recognized general principle, the more scientific knowledge and care will be required in their very composition, and the greater the knowledge of technical details and terminology needed for the translator to carry out his task. Upon this twofold ladder, then, the translator ascends higher and higher above the interpreter until he reaches the realm most properly his, namely, those works of art and science in which the author's free individual combinatory faculties, on the one hand, and the spirit of the language along with the entire system of views and sentiments in all their shadings represented in it, on the other, count for everything; the object no longer dominates in any way, but rather is governed by thought and feeling; indeed, it often comes into existence only through being uttered and exists only in this utterance.

Yet what is the basis for this important distinction that is visible even in these borderline regions but shines forth most brilliantly at the furthest extremes? Business dealings generally involve a matter of readily apparent, or at least fairly well defined objects; all negotiations are, as it were, arithmetical or geometrical in nature, and numbers and measures come to one's aid at every step; and even in the case of notions that, as the ancients already observed, encompass the greater and lesser within themselves and are indicated by a graded series of terms that vary in ordinary usage, making their import uncertain, habit and convention soon serve to fix the usage of the individual terms. So long as the speaker does not smuggle in hidden vaguenesses with intent to deceive, or err out of carelessness, he will be perfectly comprehensible to anyone with knowledge of both the matter under discussion and the language, and in any given case only slight variations in language use will be encountered. Even so there will be scarcely any doubt that cannot easily be remedied as to which expression in the one language corresponds to any given expression in the other. Thus is translation in this realm little more than a mechanical task which can be performed by anyone who has moderate knowledge of the two languages, with little difference to be found between better and lesser efforts as long as obvious errors are avoided. When, however, artistic and scientific works are to be transplanted from one language to another, two sorts of considerations arise which alter the situation. For if in any two languages each word in the one were to correspond perfectly to a word in the other, expressing the same idea with the same range of meaning; if their declensions displayed the same relationships, and the structures of their periods coincided so that the two languages in fact differed only to the ear: then all translation in the areas of art and science, assuming the sole matter to be communicated was the information contained in an utterance or piece of writing, would be as purely mechanical as in business transactions; and, setting aside the effects produced by tone and intonation, one might claim of any given translation that it placed the foreign reader in the same relationship to the author and his work as was the reader of the original. As it happens, however, just the opposite is true for all languages that are not so closely related as to count almost as different dialects of a single tongue, and the further removed they are from one

idea - relationship between language is completely irrational - how to translate must proceed that.

another in etymology and years, the more it will be seen that not a single word in one language will correspond perfectly to a word in another, nor does any pattern of declensions in the one contain precisely the same multiplicity of relationships as in another. Since this irrationality, as I would like to call it, permeates all elements of two languages, it must also, to be sure, affect that sphere of bourgeois affairs we have mentioned. Yet it is obviously less of a hindrance here, having little or no effect. All words that stand for objects and actions that can be of consequence are, as it were, gauged according to a standard measure, and even if, out of unfounded faint-hearted oversubtlety, one were to protest that the words were being inconsistently applied, the simple facts of the matter should serve to resolve all quibbles. Quite different is the case in the arts and sciences, and indeed in every sphere in which thought that is one with speech predominates and it is not the facts that make of the word a perhaps arbitrarily determined and then irrevocably fixed sign. For how infinitely laborious and knotty the business becomes here! What firm knowledge and mastery of the two languages does it require! And how often, where it is generally acknowledged that a perfect equivalent for an expression cannot be found, do even the most knowledgeable scholars, well-versed in both the language itself and the subject matter, diverge significantly in their attempts to choose the most fitting word. This is equally true of the vivid picturesque expressions of poetic works and of the most abstract works of the noblest sciences that show us the most profound and universal nature of things.

The second matter, however, that makes translation proper a quite different activity from ordinary interpreting is this. Wherever utterances are not bound by readily apparent objects or external circumstances which it is merely their task to name – wherever, in other words, the speaker is engaged in more or less independent thought, that is, self-expression, he stands in a twofold relationship to language, and his words will be understood aright only insofar as this relationship itself is correctly grasped. Every human being is, on the one hand, in the power of the language he speaks; he and all his thought are its products. He cannot think with complete certainty anything that lies outside its boundaries; the form of his ideas, the manner in which he combines them, and the limits of these combinations are all preordained by the language in which he was born and raised: both his intellect and his imagination are bound by it. On the other hand, every free-thinking, intellectually independent individual shapes the language in his turn. For how else if not by these influences could it have gained and grown from its raw beginnings to its present, more perfect state of development in the sciences and arts? In this sense, then, it is the living force of the individual that causes new forms to emerge from the tractable matter of language, in each case with the initial aim of passing on a fleeting state of consciousness, but leaving behind now a greater, now a fainter trace in the language that, taken up by others, continues to have an ever broader shaping influence. Indeed, one can say that only to the extent that a person influences language in this way does he deserve to be heard outside his immediate sphere of activity, whatever it may be. Every utterance will quickly pass away if it is such that any one of a thousand voices might reproduce it; only that one is able and entitled to endure which constitutes a new moment in the life of language itself. For this reason, every nobler, free utterance must be grasped in two different senses, first in terms of the genius of the language from whose elements it was derived, as an

language as a boundary

expressive means tied to and determined by this spirit that brought it to life within the speaker; yet it must also be understood in terms of the speaker himself, as an act that can only have emerged out of, and be explained as a product of, his particular being. Indeed, every utterance of this sort will be understood in the higher sense of the word only when these two sets of relationships are conceived of both together and in their true connection to one another, so that no question remains concerning which of the two dominates in the utterance as a whole and in its individual parts. One understands an utterance as an action of the speaker only if, at the same time, one can feel where and how he was seized by the force of the language, where along its path the lightning flashes of thought snaked their way, where and how in its forms errant imagination was held fast. One understands speech both as a work of language and as an expression of its spirit only if, while feeling that only a Hellene, for instance, can have thought and spoken thus, that only this language can have influenced a human spirit thus, one at the same time feels that only thus can *this man* have thought and spoken in a Hellenic manner, only thus can he have seized and worked to shape this language, and what is here manifested is only his living grasp on the richness of the language, his keen sense of rhythm and euphony, and his capacity to think and to fashion. Now if understanding works of this sort is already difficult even in the same language and involves immersing oneself in both the spirit of the language and the writer's characteristic nature, how much yet nobler an art must it be when we are speaking of the products of a foreign, far distant tongue! To be sure, whoever has mastered this art of understanding by studying the language with diligence, acquiring precise knowledge of the entire historical life of a people and picturing keenly before him the individual works and their authors – *he*, to be sure, and he alone is justified in desiring to bring to his countrymen and contemporaries just this same understanding of these masterworks of art and science. But his scruples must needs multiply when he prepares to approach the task, when the time comes for him to specify his goals and he begins to survey the means at his disposal. Should he really venture to take two men who are as far distant from one another as his countryman who speaks only his own language and the writer himself, and to bring them together in so immediate a relationship as that between a writer and his original reader? Or if he wishes to give his readers only the same understanding and the same pleasure which he himself enjoys, one marked, to be sure, with the traces of his effort, and with the feeling of the foreign admixed with it, how can he achieve even this, let alone provide the understanding and pleasure of the original reader, by the means available to him? If his readers are to understand, then they must grasp the genius of the language that was native to the writer, they must be able to observe his characteristic manner of thinking and sensibility; and all he can offer them as a help for achieving these two things is their own language, corresponding in none of its parts to the other tongue, along with himself, as he has recognized his writer now the more, now the less lucidly, and as he admires and applauds the writer's work now more, now less. Does not translation appear, viewed in this way, an utterly foolish undertaking? Therefore, in despair of reaching this goal, or, if one prefers, before the thought of a goal was even fully formed, two new methods were devised for making the acquaintance of foreign works – not for the sake of genuine artistic and linguistic virtuosity, but rather to fill a spiritual need, on the one hand, and to serve a

spiritual art, on the other – methods that eliminate by force some of the difficulties mentioned above, cunningly circumvent others, and in any case altogether abandon the notion of translation we have been proposing; these methods are paraphrase and imitation. Paraphrase sets out to overcome the irrationality of languages, but only in a mechanical way. Its approach is to say: even if I cannot find a word in my language to correspond to the one in the original, I will attempt to approximate its value by adding restrictive and amplifying modifiers. Thus caught between a burdensome too-much and a tormenting too-little, it laboriously works its way through a great mass of individual details. Through this approach it can perhaps reproduce the contents of a work with some accuracy, but the impression made by the work must be dispensed with altogether; for living speech hereby perishes irrevocably, it being clear that all these words could not have sprung originally thus from a human mind. The paraphrast treats the elements of the two languages as though they were mathematical signs that can be reduced to the same value by means of addition and subtraction, and neither the genius of the language being subjected to transformation nor that of the original tongue becomes apparent under this procedure. If, moreover, paraphrase seeks to mark psychologically the traces of the connections between thoughts – wherever these are indistinct and threaten to disappear – with the help of interpolated sentences pounded in like notice stakes, then in the case of more difficult works it is striving at the same time to take the place of a commentary, making it all the less apt to be considered a form of translation. Imitation, on the other hand, surrenders to the irrationality of languages; it concedes that one cannot possibly produce in another tongue a replica of a work of rhetorical art that in its individual parts would correspond perfectly to the individual parts of the original, but that given the differences between languages, with which so many other differences are essentially caught up, we have no other recourse but to contrive a copy, an entire work comprised of parts that differ noticeably from the parts of the original, yet which in its effect comes so close to the original as the differences in the material permit. Now such a copy is no longer the work itself, and it makes no pretense to be showing us the spirit of the original language as an effective force in its own right, particularly as the foreignness this spirit has produced now appears with different underpinnings; rather, a work of this sort, taking into account the differences in language, morals and education, strives to be for its readers, as far as possible, everything the original provided its original readers; for the sake of preserving the unity of the impression made by the work, its identity is sacrificed. The imitator, then, considering impossible any sort of unmediated relationship between the writer and the reader of the imitation, makes no effort to bring the two together; rather, he strives only to give the reader an impression similar to the one received by readers who shared a language and an age with the author of the original. Paraphrase is more commonly found in the sciences, and imitation in the fine arts; and as everyone will concede that a work of art loses its tone, its luster, indeed its very character as art once it is paraphrased, surely no one has yet been so foolish as to attempt to produce an imitation of a scientific masterpiece that rendered its contents loosely. Both these procedures, however, will fail to satisfy someone who, filled with admiration for the excellence of a foreign masterpiece, wishes to enlarge the sphere of its influence to include fellow speakers of his language and has in mind a stricter notion of translation. Neither procedure, then,

as they diverge from this notion, can receive more detailed consideration here; they have been named only as landmarks showing the boundaries of the region with which we shall concern ourselves.

Now as for the translator proper who truly wishes to bring together these two quite separate persons, his writer and his reader, and to help the reader, though without forcing him to leave the bounds of his own native tongue behind him, to acquire as correct and complete an understanding of and take as much pleasure in the writer as possible – what sorts of paths might he set off upon to this end? In my opinion, there are only two possibilities. Either the translator leaves the author in peace as much as possible and moves the reader toward him; or he leaves the reader in peace as much as possible and moves the writer toward him. These two paths are so very different from one another that one or the other must certainly be followed as strictly as possible, any attempt to combine them being certain to produce a highly unreliable result and to carry with it the danger that writer and reader might miss each other completely. The difference between these two methods, as well as their relationship to one another, should be obvious at once. For in the first case the translator is endeavoring, in his work, to compensate for the reader's inability to understand the original language. He seeks to impart to the reader the same image, the same impression that he himself received thanks to his knowledge of the original language of the work as it was written, thus moving the reader to his own position, one in fact foreign to him. Yet if the translation wants to make its Roman author, say, speak as he would have spoken and written as a German to Germans, this would not merely move the author as far as the position of the translator – for to him as well the author speaks not German, but Latin – but rather thrust him directly into the world of the German readers and turn him into one of them; this, then, is the second case. The first translation will be perfect in its way if one can say that if the author had learned German just as well as the translator has learned Latin, then he would have translated his work, written originally in Latin, no differently than the translator has done. The other method, however, showing the author not as he himself would have translated but the way that he as a German would have written originally in German, can hardly have any other standard of perfection than if one could claim for certain that, if the German readers were transformed one and all into connoisseurs and contemporaries of the author, the work itself would appear just the same to them as now, the author having been transformed into a German, the translation does. This is no doubt the method imagined by all those who like to say that one should translate an author just as he himself would have written in German. From this juxtaposition it is immediately clear how different a procedure is required in each particular instance, and how, were one to tergiversate within a single work, the whole would become unintelligible and profitless. Yet I will continue to insist that beside these two methods there can exist no third one that might serve some particular end. For there are no other possible ways of proceeding. The two separate parties must be united either at some point between the two – and that will always be the position of the translator – or else the one must betake itself to the other, and only one of these two possibilities lies within the realm of translation, for the other could occur only if, in our case, the German readers were to achieve complete mastery of the Roman tongue or rather would themselves be mastered by it to the point of their

ultimate metamorphosis. So whatever else one hears said about translations that adhere to the letter or to the meaning of a work, that are faithful or free, and whatever other expressions might now be in common use – if these too are supposed to be different methods, it must be possible to derive them from the original two; but if failings and virtues are to be described in these terms, then what is faithful and true-to-meaning in the one method, or too literal or too free, will differ in the other. It is therefore my intention, setting to one side all the various questions regarding this subject that have already been treated by the cognoscenti, to examine only the most general characteristics of these two methods so as to prepare for a more general understanding of the characteristic advantages and difficulties of each, the extent to which each most fully achieves the goals of translation, and the limits of applicability in each case. After such a comprehensive survey, there will remain two matters to be treated, for which this discourse is merely the introduction. For each of the two methods one might outline a set of instructions referring to the different rhetorical genres, and one might compare and judge the most admirable efforts that have been made according to both views, and by these means elucidate the matter even further. Both of these tasks I must leave to others, or at least to another occasion.

The method whose aim it is to give the reader, through the translation, the impression he would have received as a German reading the work in the original language, must, to be sure, first decide what sort of understanding of the original language it intends, as it were, to imitate. For there is one sort of understanding that it may not imitate, and another that it cannot. The first is a schoolboyish understanding that bungles its way with great effort and all but distaste through line after line, and yet nowhere arrives at a clear survey of the whole, a living grasp of its contents. As long as the educated part of a nation still has, on the whole, no experience of a deeper knowledge of foreign tongues, then may even those who are further advanced be preserved by their guardian spirits from undertaking translations of this sort. For if they wished to take their own understanding as a standard, they themselves would be little understood and would achieve little; but if their translation aimed to represent ordinary understanding, then the clumsy work could not be booed quickly enough from the stage. During such a period, then, free imitations should first awaken and whet readers' appetites for foreign works, and paraphrase prepare for a more general understanding, so as to pave the way for future translations.[1] There is another understanding, however, that no translator can imitate. For let us consider those extraordinary men such as Nature is in the habit sometimes of producing, as if to show herself able to destroy even the barriers of national particularity in individual cases, men who feel such natural affinity to a foreign state of being that they immerse themselves, in both their lives and their thoughts, in a foreign language and its works, and as they occupy themselves entirely with a foreign world, they allow their native world and their native tongue to become quite foreign to them; or else those other men who are destined to represent the power of speech in all its glory and for whom all the languages they can somehow acquire are equally serviceable and suit them as if made for them: these men stand upon a point at which the value of translation approaches zero; since they are able to grasp foreign works free from the influence of their mother tongue, and to perceive their own understanding not in their mother tongue but with perfectly native ease in the

original language of the work, and as they feel no incommensurability at all between their thought and the language they are reading, no translation can ever attain or depict their understanding. And just as it would mean pouring water into the sea, or into wine, if one wished to translate for them, so too are they wont to smile in certainly not unjustified condescension, even pity, at the exertions being made in this area. For, to be sure, if the audience for which the translations are being made resembled them, these efforts would be needless. Translation, then, concerns a state that lies midway between these two, and the translator must take it as his goal to furnish his reader with just such an image and just such enjoyment as reading the work in the original language would have provided the well educated man whom we are in the habit of calling, in the best sense of the word, an amateur and connoisseur, a man who is well acquainted with the foreign language, yet to whom it remains nonetheless foreign, who must no longer think each detail through in his mother tongue like a schoolboy before he is able to grasp the whole, yet who, even where he can take pleasure unhindered in the beauty of a work, remains ever conscious of the differences between this language and his mother tongue. To be sure, the domain of this sort of translation and its purpose remain uncertain enough even after these points have been settled. Only this much do we see, that just as the inclination to translate cannot arise until a certain foreign language ability has been established among the educated, so too will the art of translation grow and its aim be set higher and higher when connoisseurship and the taste for foreign works become more widespread and more advanced among those who have trained and educated their ears, without, however, having made the study of languages their primary occupation. Yet at the same time we cannot deny that the more receptive the readers who might avail themselves of such translations, the more towering become the difficulties of the task, above all if one considers the most characteristic works of art and science produced among a people, these naturally being the translator's principal objects. For just as language is a historical entity, so too is it impossible to appreciate it rightly without an appreciation of its history. Languages are not invented, and all arbitrary work one might undertake to perform on and in them would be folly; rather, they are gradually discovered, and science and art are the forces by means of which this discovery is furthered and perfected. Every preeminent spirit in whom some portion of a nation's views takes characteristic shape in one of these two forms must necessarily labor within his language to make this come about, and the works he produces must therefore also contain part of the history of the language. This, to be sure, causes the translator of scientific works considerable, yea, often insurmountable difficulties; for whoever, armed with adequate knowledge, reads a preeminent work of this sort in its original tongue will not fail to note the influence this work has had on the language. He will note which words and associations of ideas appear to him there in the first splendor of novelty; he will see how they have insinuated themselves into the language by way of the specific needs of this spirit and its expressive powers; and what he thus notes will largely determine the impression he receives. Therefore it belongs to the task of translation to communicate just these things to the reader; else he will be missing an often quite significant part of what was intended for him. But how is this to be achieved? Even on a small scale, how often will it happen that the term best corresponding to a new word in the original will be one that in our language is already old and

worn out, so that the translator, would he show the work's contribution to the development of the language, will be forced to introduce foreign content into the passage, deviating into the realm of imitation! How often, even where he is able to replace new with new, will the term that is most similar in etymology and form not give the most faithful account of the meaning, finally obliging him to call up other associations – if he would preserve the immediate context! He will have to console himself that he will be able to make up for the loss in other passages where the author used only old, familiar words, and thus he may still achieve at large what cannot be accomplished in each individual case. If we consider, however, a master's power to shape the language in a larger context, his use of related words and their roots in great quantities of works that make reference to one another, how is the translator to find his way, given that the system of ideas and the signs for them in his language are completely different than in the original, and the roots of the words, instead of neatly corresponding to one another, rather overlap in the most curious patterns? It is therefore impossible that the language use of the translator could cohere everywhere in exactly the same way as that of his author. Here, then, he will have to be content to achieve in the particular what he cannot on the whole. He will stipulate as a condition for his readers that they do not compare each work with others by the same author with the same rigor as would be applied by readers of the original, but rather consider each more on its own terms, indeed, that they should praise him when he succeeds within individual works, or even only within their several subsections, in preserving a certain uniformity in the intention of the more important objects so that a given word is not matched with a host of different proxies, or the translation marked by a miscellany of expressions where the original confined itself to a select few. These difficulties are found above all in scientific works; other difficulties, and certainly not lesser ones, occur in the areas of poetry and artistical prose, in which the musical element of language that reveals itself in rhythm and alterations of tone is itself expressive and holds a higher meaning. It is sensible to all that the finest spirit, the highest magic of art in its most perfect works is lost when these things are disregarded or destroyed. Whatever, therefore, strikes the judicious reader of the original in this respect as characteristic, as intentional, as having an influence on tone and feeling, as decisive for the mimetic or musical accompaniment of speech: all these things our translator must render. But how often – indeed, that we are not obliged to say "always" borders on the miraculous – does one find fidelity to rhythm and melody caught in irreconcilable conflict with fidelity to dialectic and grammar! How difficult it is to prevent, in the eternal back and forth of what is to be sacrificed here and what there, a result that often is precisely the least fitting! How even more difficult that the translator must always compel himself to replace impartially, wherever the opportunity presents itself, that of which he has had to deprive the reader, not letting himself slip, even unconsciously, into a pertinacious one-sidedness because his inclinations bid him favor one artistical element above all the others! For if what he loves in the work of art is more the ethical subject matter and its treatment, then he will be the less likely to note how often he has done an injustice to the metrical and musical elements of the form and, rather than thinking of how to compensate for the loss, content himself with a rendering that tends ever more to lightness and, as it were, to paraphrase. Should it happen, however, that the translator is a musician or skilled in metrical verse,

then he will neglect the logical element so as to seize hold of the musical, and as he becomes ever more deeply caught up in this one-sidedness, he will find his labors increasingly bootless; and when comparing his translation as a whole to the original, one will find that, without his remarking it, he will have approached nearer and nearer to that schoolboy inadequacy that loses sight of the whole for the sake of the part, for when in the interest of the material likeness of tone and rhythm what is expressed in one language with lightness and naturalness is replaced by clumsy, displeasing expressions in the other, then a quite different overall impression must result.

Yet other difficulties emerge when the translator considers his relationship to the language in which he writes and the relationship of his translation to his other works. Excepting those extraordinary masters who have equal command of several languages, or even find that one they have learned comes more naturally to them than their mother tongue, men for whom, as has been said, it is not possible to translate – excepting them, all other people, as fluently as they might read a foreign tongue, will yet retain while doing so a feeling of the foreign. Now how shall the translator contrive to disseminate among his readers this sense of encountering the foreign when he presents them with a translation in their own tongue? Surely one can reply that the solution to this riddle has long been obvious, and that, moreover, it has been solved, all too often perhaps, more than well enough; for the more precisely the translation adheres to the turns and figures of the original, the more foreign it will seem to its reader. By all means, it is easy enough to smile at this practice in general. Yet if one is wary of purchasing this pleasure too cheaply, of throwing out the most masterful attempts and the worst schoolboy efforts with the same bathwater, one must admit that an indispensable requirement for this method of translating is a disposition of the language that not only departs from the quotidian but lets one perceive that it was not left to develop freely but rather was bent to a foreign likeness; and it must be confessed that achieving this with art and measure, with detriment neither to oneself nor to the language, is perhaps the greatest difficulty our translator must confront. This undertaking would appear to be the most extraordinary form of humiliation to which a writer of some quality can subject himself. Who would not like to make his native tongue appear everywhere displaying the most splendid characteristic beauty allowed by each genre? Who would not prefer to beget children who would purely represent their fathers' lineage, rather than mongrels? Who would suffer himself to be seen moving with far less lightness and grace than that of which he is capable, and to appear at least occasionally harsh and stiff so as to displease the reader just enough to keep him conscious of what one is about? Who would gladly consent to be considered ungainly for striving to adhere so closely to the foreign tongue as his own language allows, and to being criticized, like parents who entrust their children to tumblers for their education, for having failed to exercise his mother tongue in the sorts of gymnastics native to it, instead accustoming it to alien, unnatural contortions! And who, finally, would wish to see himself smiled upon with utmost condescension by precisely the greatest masters and connoisseurs, who assure him that they would be entirely unable to understand his laborious, ill-considered German if they had not their knowledge of Greek and Latin to come to their aid! These are the sacrifices every translator of this sort is obliged to make, these the dangers to which he exposes

himself if, in his attempt to preserve a foreign tone in the language of his translation, he does not observe that finest of lines, and these are dangers and sacrifices he cannot possibly avoid outright, as every person draws this line in a slightly different spot. If he thinks now of the inevitable influence habit must have – well, then, may he fear that even his own freely composed, original writings could be invaded by coarse and improper elements originating in his own translations, and his delicate sensibility for the native well-being of his own language blunted. And should he dare to consider that great army of imitators and the indolence and mediocrity that prevail in literary circles, then surely he must be seized with terror at the thought of the slovenly disregard for the rules of euphony, the genuine woodenness and dissonance, the detriment to the language in various forms for which he may now be held jointly responsible; for almost only the very best and the very worst will not strive to profit falsely from his efforts. The cries that translation of this sort must necessarily have a detrimental effect from within on the purity of the language and the peaceful course of its development have often been heard. Even if we choose to dismiss them for the moment with the perhaps empty promise that advantages are sure to accompany these detriments, and that even as all good things come with an admixture of bad, the wise course of action will always be to acquire as much as possible of the former while taking along as little as possible of the latter, the difficult task of representing the foreign in one's own mother tongue will most certainly bring with it certain consequences. First, it is clear that this method of translating cannot flourish equally well in all tongues, but rather only in those that are not confined within the narrow bounds of a classical style beyond which all else is deemed reprehensible. Let these bounded languages seek to expand their territories by inducing foreigners who require more than their native tongues to speak them, something to which these languages are no doubt admirably suited; and let them appropriate foreign works by means of imitations or perhaps translations of that other sort: but this sort of translation they must leave to the freer languages in which deviations and innovations are more readily tolerated, such that these deviations may, in the end, combine to produce a new characteristic mode of expression. It also follows clearly enough that this sort of translation has no value at all if it is practiced only randomly in individual cases in a given tongue. For what is being aimed at is plainly far more than merely causing some indifferent sort of foreign spirit to waft in the reader's direction; rather, he is to be given an inkling, if only a distant one, of the original language and what the work owes to it, and thus some of what he loses for not understanding the original tongue is here compensated: he is not only to have a vague sense that what he is reading does not sound unquestionably native to his own tongue; rather, it should sound foreign in a quite specific way; this, however, is only possible if he is able to make comparisons on a large scale. If he has read several works that he knows were translated from modern languages, and others from ancient ones, and if all of them were translated in this way, then surely he will develop an ear for the differences between the ancient and the modern. He will have to have read a great deal more, however, before he can differentiate between works of Hellenic and Roman origin, or Italian and Spanish. And yet even this would hardly be the highest goal; rather, the reader of the translation will be a match for the better reader of the original work only when he is able to sense and eventually grasp with confidence not only the spirit

of the language but also the author's characteristic spirit, for which, to be sure, the talent of intuitive perception is the only possible organ, yet to this end, too, a far greater number of comparisons are utterly necessary. These comparisons cannot be made if only individual masterpieces in individual genres are translated. Even the most educated readers will acquire in this way only a highly imperfect knowledge of the foreign through translation; it is inconceivable, then, that they might rise to the level of forming actual judgments, be it about translations or originals. This sort of translation, then, clearly requires a large-scale operation, the transplanting of entire literatures into a single tongue, and it has meaning and value only in a nation whose people are favorably disposed to appropriate the foreign. Individual works of this sort have value only as forerunners of a more generally developing and burgeoning inclination. If they cannot arouse the desire to follow this practice, then there must be something against them in the spirit of the language and of the time; they will appear simply as failed attempts and enjoy little or no success. Yet even if this business prevails, it can hardly be expected that a work of this sort, splendid as it might be, will enjoy general approbation. Given all that must be taken into consideration, all the difficulties to be surmounted, different views will develop as to which parts of the task are to be emphasized and which deemed subordinate. And so different schools, as it were, will form among the master practitioners, and different parties of their adherents among the reading public; and even though it is the same method that forms the basis of each school, different translations of the same work made from different points of view will be able to coexist, and it would be difficult to say that any one of them is as a whole more perfect than the others or falls short in merit; rather, certain passages will prove more successful in one version, and other passages in another version, and only the sum of all these taken together and in relation to each other – the way one places particular value on approximating the original language, while the other rather insists that no violence be done to its own – will fulfill the task completely, and each in its own right will always have only relative and subjective value.

These are the difficulties that oppose this method of translating, and the flaws inherent in it. Yet even given these, one must still acknowledge the legitimacy of the undertaking itself, whose achievements cannot be denied. It is founded on two basic conditions: that the understanding of foreign texts be acknowledged as a known and desirable state, and that a certain flexibility be granted to our native tongue. Where both conditions are met, translation of this sort will appear a quite natural phenomenon that influences the entire intellectual development of a nation, and even as it is given a certain value, it will not fail to give pleasure as well.

But what of the opposite method, which, wishing to spare its reader all exertion and toil, sets out to summon the foreign author as if by magic into his immediate presence and to show the work as it would be had the author himself written it originally in the reader's tongue? This demand has often been cited as one that should be made of a true translator, representing a far nobler and more perfect aim than the one previously described; and individual attempts have been undertaken, perhaps even masterpieces, that have clearly enough assigned it as their goal. Let us now look at how matters stand with regard to this other method, and whether it might not perhaps be good if this practice, till now indisputably less common,

were to be more frequently encountered and were to replace the questionable one that is in so many ways lacking.

It is immediately obvious that the translator's language has nothing at all to fear from this method. His foremost rule, given the relation in which his work stands to a foreign tongue, must be to allow himself nothing that would not also be allowed in any original work of the same genre written in his native tongue. Indeed, as much as anyone he has the duty to heed at least the same concern for the purity and perfection of his language and to attempt to achieve the same lightness and naturalness of style for which his author might be extolled in the original. This too is certain: that if we wish to make clear to our compatriots what a writer's work meant for the language in which he wrote it, we can find no better formula than to introduce him into our language speaking in such a way as we must assume he would have spoken had our language been his own, particularly if the stage of development that his language occupied when he came to it bears some similarity to the one currently occupied by ours. In a certain sense, it is possible for us to think of how Tacitus might have spoken had he been German, or, to be more precise, how a German would speak whose relationship to our language was the same as that of Tacitus to his own; and happy is he who is able to imagine this so vividly that he can really make him speak! Yet whether this would succeed if the translator had him say just the same things as the Roman Tacitus said in Latin is quite a different question, one difficult to answer in the affirmative. For it is one thing to grasp correctly and somehow represent the influence that a man has had upon his language, and another thing altogether to guess at the turns that his thoughts and their expression would have taken had he originally been used to thinking and expressing himself in some other tongue! Whoever is convinced of the inner, essential identity between thought and expression – and this conviction forms the basis for the entire art of understanding speech and thus of all translation as well – can he wish to sever a man from his native tongue and still believe that this man, or even so much as a train of thought, might turn out the same in two languages? Or if the train of thought is then in some way different, can he presume to break down speech to its inmost core so as to separate out that part played by language and then through a new and, as it were, chemical process conjoin the inner core of speech with the being and force of another tongue? For would it not seem that to carry out this task one must first eliminate everything in a man's written work that showed, even to the slightest extent, the influence of all he had spoken and heard in his mother tongue from childhood on, and then add, as it were, to his naked characteristic way of thinking in its approach to a particular object all that would have resulted from all he would have spoken and heard in the foreign tongue from either the beginning of his life or his first acquaintance with this language until he had acquired the skill necessary to think and write originally in it? This will not be possible until we have succeeded in assembling organic products through an artificial chemical process. Indeed, one can say that the goal of translating just as the author himself would have written originally in the language of the translation is not only unattainable, but is also in itself null and void; for whoever acknowledges the formative power of language, which is one with the particular nature of a people, must also concede that the entire knowledge of even the most exceptional man, as well as his ability to represent it, has come to him with and through language, and that no one has his language

mechanically attached to him from the outside as if by straps, so that one might, as easily as one would unharness a team of horses and replace it with another, harness on a new language as it happened to suit one's frame of mind; but rather that each person produces originally only in his mother tongue, and that the question of how he would have written his works in another language ought not even to be raised. To be sure, two cases that are commonly enough met can be offered here to counter my examples. First, there is clearly such a thing as the ability to write in languages other than one's native tongue, even in the areas of philosophy and poetry, and this not only appears in isolated cases, although such cases continue to occur, but is quite common. Why, then, should one not, to avail oneself of a more reliable point of reference, suppose this ability in every author one intends to translate? What speaks against this is that the ability is so constituted as to appear only in those cases in which the same thing could either not be said at all in a man's native tongue or at least not by him. If we go back in time to when the Romance languages were beginning to emerge, who could say what language was native to the people living there? And who would want to deny that for those with scholarly aspirations Latin was more a native tongue than the vernacular? This goes much deeper for specific intellectual activities and needs. As long as the mother tongue has not yet grown to fit these needs, the language in which endeavors of the spirit first announced themselves to a people still undergoing development remains their partial mother tongue. Grotius and Leibnitz could not, at least without having been other people entirely, have written philosophy in German and Dutch. Indeed, even if the root has shriveled up altogether and the runner been torn away from the old trunk, whoever is not himself a being simultaneously engaged in shaping and uprooting his language will often be forced to cleave to some foreign language either chosen arbitrarily or dictated by secondary considerations. All the noblest and finest thoughts of our great king[2] came to him in a foreign language, which he had made his most intimate property. He could not possibly have written in German the philosophy and poetry he set down in French. It is regrettable that the great love certain members of his family held for England did not result in his having been instructed in English from an early age, a tongue far closer to German, and one whose last golden age was then in full flower. But we can certainly hope that if he had enjoyed a more rigorous scholarly education, he would rather have written his philosophy and poetry in Latin than in French. Since, therefore, special conditions adhere in this instance, it being only in a particular foreign language and not in some arbitrarily chosen one that each person achieves some particular aim that could not have been realized in his mother tongue, it cannot serve as evidence for a method of translation that means to show us how someone might have written in some other language what he in fact has written in his mother tongue. The second case, however, which concerns reading and writing originally in foreign languages, would appear more promising for this method. For who would wish to belittle our courtiers and men of the world by denying that the pretty speeches that trip from their tongues in various languages were not also conceived from the outset in these languages and not, say, first translated in their heads from the shabby German? And just as they are famed for being able to utter these sugarplums of eloquence equally well in various languages, they no doubt think them in all these languages with equivalent ease, and each of them will no doubt be instantly in a position to

say how the other would have formulated in Italian what he has just finished saying in French. Yet these speeches, to be sure, do not lie in a sphere in which thoughts shoot up forcefully from the deep roots of a particular language; they are rather like the watercress that an artful man causes to sprout without soil on a white cloth. These speeches represent language neither in all its sacred gravity nor in its pleasant, well-measured play; rather, just as the people of different nations have begun to intermingle in a way formerly not often seen, so do we find a marketplace all around us, and these conversations are market talk, be they political or literary in content, or merely convivial, and they truly fall not within the domain of the translator, but rather – shall we say? – that of the interpreter. Now when speech of this sort, as sometimes happens, is interwoven into a piece of writing, such writing, which disports itself entirely in the bright and gay reaches of life without delving into the profundities of existence or capturing the characteristic nature of a people, may well be translated according to this rule; but only writing of this sort, for it alone might just as well have been set down originally in another language. And this rule may extend no further than, say, the prefaces and preambles of more splendid and profound works, which often are constructed entirely in the realm of light social intercourse. For the more the specific nature of a people leaves its mark on the individual thoughts that appear in a work and the connections drawn between them, to which perhaps may even be added the stamp of an age long past, the more this rule will cease to have meaning. For, true as it remains in many respects that only through the knowledge of several languages does a man become educated in a certain sense and a cosmopolite, we must all the same confess that just as we cannot accept as true cosmopolitism one that at critical moments supplants a man's love of his fatherland, so too with regard to languages is a general love not the proper, truly educational sort if, in both quotidian and nobler contexts, it would just as soon substitute some other language, ancient or modern, for the paternal tongue. One must be loyal to one language or another, just as to one nation, or else drift disoriented in an unlovely in-between realm. It is fitting that Latin should still be used among us for official business, lest we forget that this was the sacred scientific mother tongue of our forebears; it is salutary, too, that this practice should continue throughout the European scientific community so as to facilitate interchange; yet even in this case it will succeed only to the extent that in these works the subject matter is everything and the writer's views and special manner of making connections count for little. The same holds true of Romance languages. Whoever is forced to write such a language in some official capacity will certainly be well aware that his thoughts, as they are first conceived, are German: he merely begins to translate them while the embryo is still in an early stage of development; and whoever makes the sacrifice of writing in another language for the sake of scientific inquiry will be able to write freely and without constraint, rather than secretly translating as he goes along, only when he can lose himself in his subject matter. To be sure, there are those who write in Latin and French for their own amusement, and if the aim of this activity were truly to write equally as well and as originally in the foreign tongue as in one's own, then I would not hesitate to declare this a wicked and magical art like the trick of doubling oneself, an attempt not only to mock the laws of nature but also to bewilder. This, however, is clearly not its design; rather, this activity is only a sort of tasteful mimetic game that allows one to while away a

pleasant hour in the antechambers of science and art. What one produces in a foreign tongue is not original; rather, memories of some particular writer or perhaps the style of a certain period, representing, as it were, some general personage, appear before the mind's eye almost like a living image in the outside world, and the imitation of this image guides and defines what one produces. Thus rarely does anything come about by this means that might have true worth beyond mimetic precision; and one's pleasure in this popular trick is all the more innocuous as the person being imitated is readily visible throughout. But if someone has turned against nature and custom and deserted, as it were, his mother tongue, devoting himself instead to another, it need not be affectation or mockery when he assures us he is no longer in a position to move freely in his native language; rather, by this justification he is seeking to convince himself that his nature really is a natural wonder that subverts all hierarchies and laws, and to reassure others that he is at least not walking about double like a ghost.

Yet too long have we tarried over matters foreign to our inquiry, creating the impression that we meant to speak of works written in foreign tongues rather than translations from them. In fact, it is as follows. If it is impossible to write originally in a foreign language something that at once requires and is worthy of translation, insofar as translation is an art, or if this must at least be seen as a rare and wondrous exception, then one cannot put forth as a rule for translation that it must think of how the author himself would have written just the same thing in the translator's tongue; for there are all too few examples of bilingual writers from whom we might derive an analogy which the translator might follow; rather, in accordance with the foregoing, he will have little more than his imagination to assist him in dealing with works that resemble neither light entertainment nor the style of business transactions. Indeed, what objection can be made if a translator says to his reader: Here I bring you the book as the man would have written it had he written in German; and the reader responds: I am just as obliged to you as if you had brought me the picture of a man the way he would look if his mother had conceived him by a different father? For if in all works belonging in the higher sense to the realms of science and art the author's characteristic spirit is the mother, then the father is his paternal tongue. Each of these artifices would lay claim to mysterious insights to which no one is privy, and only in play can one enjoy the one or the other of them without reserve.

That the applicability of this method is greatly limited, being indeed well-nigh zero where translation is concerned, is best borne out when one observes the insurmountable difficulties with which it so often becomes entangled in certain branches of the sciences and arts. Since one must concede that even in everyday usage there are only a very few words in any given tongue that correspond perfectly to words in any other such that these latter can be employed in any context suitable to the former, and that in corresponding contexts each will produce just the same effect as the other, this is more true of terms the more they have a philosophical import, which is above all the case in philosophy proper. Here more than anywhere is it the case that any language, despite the different concurrently and consecutively held views expressed in it, encompasses within itself a single system of ideas which, precisely because they are contiguous, linking and complementing one another within this language, form a single whole – whose several parts, however, do not

correspond to those to be found in comparable systems in other languages, and this is scarcely excluding "God" and "to be," the noun of nouns and the verb of verbs. For even universals, which lie outside the realm of particularity, are illumined and colored by the particular. This language system subsumes the wisdom of all individuals. Each draws from what is present, and helps to bring to light what is not yet present but only prefigured. Only thus can the wisdom of the individual come alive, and only thus can it govern his existence, which he sets down entirely within this language. If, then, the translator of a philosophical author is not resolved to bend the language of his translation to accord to the greatest possible extent with the language of the original so as to give as full a sense as possible of the system of ideas inherent in this other language, if he seeks, rather, to have his author speak as though he had originally formed his thoughts and formulated his utterances in another language, what choice will this translator have, given the unlikeness of the elements in the two languages? Either he must paraphrase – which will not fulfill his purpose, for a paraphrase can and will never appear to have been composed originally in the same language – or else he must transform his man's entire wisdom and knowledge into the system of ideas in the other language, transforming all its parts accordingly, in which case it is hard to see how the wildest arbitrariness could be kept within bounds. Indeed, it must be said that whoever has the slightest respect for philosophical aspirations and developments will hardly be found engaging in such cavalier play. Let Plato answer for it if I now proceed from my discussion of philosophers to the writers of comedies.[3] This literary genre lies, as regards its use of language, closest to the realm of society conversation. The entire representation draws its breath from the customs of the age and of a particular nation, and these in turn find themselves most aptly reflected in its language. Lightness and naturalness in grace are its principal virtues; and precisely for this reason the difficulties of translation according to the method we have been considering are formidable. For every attempt to approximate one's language to a foreign tongue is detrimental to these virtues as they exist within a work. And if the translation now sets out to make a playwright speak as though he had written originally in the language of the translation, then there will be many things he cannot be allowed to utter, as they are not native to this particular nation, for which reason the language contains no signs to express them. The translator, then, must excise whole passages, destroying the power and form of the whole, or else place others in their stead. In this area, then, strictly following this formula will lead, it seems, either to imitation plain and simple or to an even more disagreeably conspicuous and disconcerting mixture of translation and imitation, which mercilessly tosses the reader back and forth like a ball between his world and the foreign one, between the inventive powers and wit of the author, on the one hand, and of the translator, on the other, which is certain to bring him no true pleasure but instead result, in the end, in dizziness and fatigue. The translator who works according to the other method, by contrast, is not called upon to undertake such single-handed transformations, since his reader is always to remain aware that the author lived in another world and wrote in another tongue. He is bound only to the admittedly difficult art of supplying this knowledge of the foreign world by the swiftest, most efficacious means, while allowing the greater lightness and naturalness of the original to shine through everywhere. These two examples taken from the farthest reaches of science and art show

clearly how little the true goal of all translation, the fullest possible unadulterated enjoyment of foreign works, can be achieved through a method that insists on breathing into the translated work the spirit of a language foreign to it. Moreover, every language has its own characteristic features, including the rhythms of its prose as well as its poetry, and if the fiction is to be put forth that the author might also have written in the language of the translator, one would have to make him appear in the rhythms of this language, which would disfigure his work even more and limit to a far greater extent the knowledge of his particular character, which the translation was to preserve.

And in fact this fiction, which alone provides the basis for the theory of translating we are at present considering, goes far beyond the aim of this endeavor. Translation as regarded from the first point of view is a matter of necessity for a people of whom only a small number are able to acquire sufficient knowledge of foreign languages, while a larger number are receptive to the enjoyment of foreign works. If this latter group could be subsumed entirely into the former, then all translation would be in vain and scarcely anyone could be found who might be willing to undertake so thankless a task. Not so with the second method. It has nothing to do with need but rather is the work of wantonness and presumption. Even were the knowledge of foreign languages as widely distributed as possible and their noblest works readily accessible to any capable person, still it would remain a peculiar undertaking, one certain to draw all the more eager listeners, if someone promised to show us a work by Cicero or Plato just as these gentlemen would have written it themselves directly in German. And if someone were to succeed in achieving this not only in his own native tongue but in one foreign to him, we would certainly then hail him as a great master of the difficult, all but impossible art of making the spirits of different tongues intermingle. But one can see that this would not be translation in the strictest sense, and its aim would not be to facilitate the most direct enjoyment of the works themselves; rather, it would become more and more an imitation, and only he who had acquired direct knowledge of the writers in question by other means would be in a position to enjoy such works of art, or of sleight of hand. And its true aim could be only to reveal the similarities between different tongues in the way specific expressions and phrases relate to certain essential features of the language, and, in general, to illumine the language using the distinctive spirit of a foreign master, who, however, has been entirely cut off from and separated from his language. As the former is merely an artful and agreeable pastime, and the latter based upon a fiction that would be all but impossible to bring about, one can understand why translation of this sort is practiced only seldom, in experiments which themselves show clearly enough that this method is impracticable on a large scale. One might also say by way of explanation that only the most accomplished masters who may judge themselves capable of marvelous feats are able to work according to this method; and only those are truly justified in doing so who have already paid their dues to the world and thus can afford themselves the leisure of this charming and somewhat dangerous pastime. All the more comprehensible is it that these masters who feel themselves capable of attempting such a thing should with some degree of pity look down upon the activities of other translators. For they believe themselves alone to be engaged in that fine and free art, whereas the others, so they suppose, stand much closer to the interpreter's work, though it

remains true that they too are working to fulfill a need, albeit a rather higher one. And these others also appear to them worthy of pity for the reason that they expend far more labor and art than is meet upon a lowly, thankless task. For which reason they have always ready at hand the counsel that one should, whenever possible, have recourse to paraphrase such as interpreters employ in difficult, contentious cases, instead of translations of this sort.

And what now? Should we adopt this view and follow this counsel? The ancients, it would seem, translated very little in this most authentic sense, and even among the moderns, most have been disheartened by the difficulties of authentic translation and content themselves with imitation and paraphrase. Who would claim that anything has ever been translated, whether from an ancient or a Germanic tongue, into French! But we Germans, while we might willingly give ear to such counsel, will surely not follow it. An inner necessity, in which a peculiar calling of our people asserts itself clearly enough, has driven us to translation *en masse*; there is no turning back, we must keep forging on. Just as it is perhaps only through the cultivation of foreign plant life that our soil has become richer and more fertile, and our climate more pleasing and milder, so too do we feel that our language, since our Nordic lassitude prevents us from exercising it sufficiently, can most vigorously flourish and develop its own strength only through extensive contact with the foreign. And we must add to this, it seems, that our people, because of its esteem for the foreign and its own mediating nature, may be destined to unite all the jewels of foreign science and art together with our own in our own language, forming, as it were, a great historical whole that will be preserved at the center and heart of Europe, so that now, with the help of our language, everyone will be able to enjoy all the beautiful things that the most different ages have given us as purely and perfectly as possible for one who is foreign to them. Indeed, this seems to be the true historical goal of translation as a whole, as it is now native to us. But this goal is served only by one method of translation, the one we first noted. Art must learn to conquer its difficulties, of which we have made no secret, to the greatest extent possible. A good beginning has been made, but the greater part still remains. Many experiments and exercises will still have to pave the way before a few excellent works are achieved; and much that initially glitters will thereafter be surpassed by a better. The extent to which individual artists have in part overcome these difficulties, in part skillfully evaded them, can be observed in various examples. And even if some of lesser skill also work in this field, we will not be so fainthearted as to fear that great harm might come to our language through their efforts. For it must first of all be established that in a language in which translation is practiced on so large a scale there must be an area of the language reserved for translations, and to them certain concessions will be made that would not be tolerated elsewhere. He who nonetheless transplants such novelties without license will find few or no followers, and if we agree not to tally up the accounts too soon, we will be able to rely on the fact that the assimilating process of the language will cast out everything that was taken up only to fulfill a temporary need and is not truly in accordance with its nature. On the other hand, we must not fail to realize that much in our language that is beautiful and strong was developed, or restored from oblivion, only through translation. We speak too little and engage in relatively too much idle chatter; and it cannot be denied that for some time now even our manner

of writing has displayed this tendency to far too great an extent – and translation has contributed not a little to promoting a more rigorous style. When the time comes wherein we have a public life that will give us, on the one hand, a society of more substance more attentive to language and, on the other, a freer space for the talents of the speaker to unfold, then will we perhaps have less need of translation for the development of our language. And may this time arrive before we have come full circle in our survey of the translator's travails!

Notes

1 This was, on the whole, the condition of the Germans at the time of which Goethe eloquently says that prose translations, even of poetic works, and these will always have to be more or less paraphrases, are more beneficial for educating young people, and thus far I can agree with him entirely; for in such an age foreign literature can be made comprehensible only in its substance, and there cannot yet be any acknowledgement of its metrical and musical value. Yet I cannot believe that even now Voss's Homer and Schlegel's Shakespeare should serve only for the entertainment of the learned among themselves; and just as little that even today a prose translation of Homer might aid in promoting taste and an aesthetic sensibility; rather, there should be for children an adaptation like Becker's, and for adults young and old a metrical translation such as, to be sure, we perhaps do not yet possess; between these two, I know nothing that might profitably be included. [Schleiermacher is referring to Goethe's comments on translation in his autobiographical work *Dichtung und Wahrheit (Poetry and Truth)*. For an English translation of these comments, see Lefevere 1992a: 74–75. Johann Heinrich Voss (1751–1826) published translations of Homer's *Iliad* (1793) and *Odyssey* (1781) in hexameter verse – an unprecedented feat in German. They were much discussed, first widely lauded but later reviled. August Wilhelm Schlegel (1767–1845) translated seventeen of Shakespeare's plays, all but one between 1796 and 1800. Trans.]

2 [Frederick II of Prussia (1712–1786), known as Frederick the Great, was raised speaking only French at the will of his father, Frederick William I, and became a great amateur of poetry and philosophy. Voltaire was a frequent guest of his at Sanssouci Castle outside Potsdam. Trans.]

3 [Schleiermacher himself translated the collected works of Plato into German. His translations were published between 1804 and 1828. Trans.]