1. Introduction

Although this article is not the place to analyze in detail the motivations of the abundance of corpus-oriented research in Translation Studies (e.g. Beeby, Rodríguez and Sánchez-Gijón 2009; Oakes and Ji 2012), it becomes evident that the aim of most recent studies in the field is to equip language professionals (McDonough 2007) with specific tools enabling them to become more efficient in their role of mediators between medium-as-meaning commodities (the localized text) engineered within complex production networks (Sturgeon 1984). This instrumentalization of translation has been concealed by way of appeals to objectivity.

Whereas translation technologies have always played a central role in translation, it is not until the advent of digitalization that the device-pull has increased the concern for feeding the "large array of devices, from mainframes to iPods, as well as many types of instruments and equipment" (Cortada 2012, 4) with taylor-made engineered content. This twist has transformed the text (translated or not) into a disposable product accessible for quick (semiotic) consumption by omnivorous audiences. Yet the study of this phenomenon has been overlooked by Translation Studies theory. According to Mossop (2006, 789), "[w]hile translation has long been a business, and translation has long been commodities (things you create in order to make a living, or a profit, not just in order to convey a message, this fact has still not been registered in translation history". Fast information consumption undermines any straightforward characterization of the translator as agent: “Translators are deemed to be mere vessels for the transmission of other people’s ideas, not deserving even of a mention in the strapline of a review” (Higgins 2008, 231).

It is thus by no means a new insight to assert that the wide range of academic engagement with the relationship between translation and ideology is missing an attempt to understand how certain market-driven ideologies actually shape translation’s theory and practice, as well as the philosophical desire to explain and unify a distinct ontology in relation to “a person's objective conditions of existence and her subjective experience of those conditions” (Mohu 2003, 401). That being said, what persistently lingers around the theoretical surface of ideological agendas in Translation Studies is a surge in the creation of concepts in favor of disciplinary ontologies and domains “for which databases exist” (Morowitz 2012, 6). The consolidation of empirical Translation Studies (Chesterman 1998), has thus positioned corpus-identified performance as a translational telos. Inevitably, this poses a contrast between two forms of doing and representing science, which places the goals of scientific search outside the field of Translation Studies, in the market of language. This empirical turn has been lapped up as a means to “give a taste of what might be possible to explore and achieve by applying corpus linguistic methodologies and statistical methods to research questions in translation studies”. (Rojo 2014,117).
In this regard, it is quite easy to figure out why Translation Studies is currently less interested in modeling a metaphysically deep disciplinary ontology, and more in testing the outcomes of fashionable research trends (which, paradoxically, gives rise to a translational ideology in its own right!). Such criticism further asserts that any empirical emphasis dictates the extent to which translation products are bestowed of a life of their own, for example, in the form of concepts and brands that "have personal and social meanings in addition to their functions" (Levy 1959, 119). This is the ideology of techno-science ("cent[red] upon the advancement and potentialization of applied sciences" [Lohff and Wahrig 2008, 416; my translation]) which, as I will discuss later promotes forms of pragmatic ideology.

Taking these considerations as a starting point, this article investigates the notion of 'pragmatic ideology', which describes, on the one hand, a pragmatist "condition after the demise of metaphysics" (Frank 1984, 30?), as well as "the regularity and factual testability of the scientific inquiry carried out by the human mind" (Lohff and Wahrig 2008, 417; my translation). The outcome of such a conceptual admixture does not necessarily conflate two separate approaches, but rather positions one against the other dynamically. Indeed, contrary to natural sciences, the concept of ideology in Translation Studies repeatedly refers back to some of the field's deep rooted epistemic contradictions. In the first place, translation ideologies are shaped by an epistemic fear of using language as a vehicle for the ideology of the other (the legitimation of others' ruling power, in the Marxist acceptance of the term), rather than the result of a consolidated epistemic privilege, i.e. the scientific proclivity to arrive at particular truths which are "amongst the hypothesis just compared" (Wray 2010, 376). Second, ideology in Translation Studies entails a move toward a monetary fetishism that conflates "appearance and essence, partial equilibrium and general equilibrium" (Elster 1991, 74; my translation). This object fetishism (based on Marxist notions of economic determinism) acts as a gauge for understanding products (as well as conceptual artifacts) as instances of human agency capable of having a life and a destiny of their own: "Objects, by the very nature of their connections with humans, quickly shift from being mediators to being intermediaries, counting for one or nothing, no matter how internally complicated they might be" (Latour 2005, 79).

Given this, we must read that human actors are increasingly entangled in their role of managers of the objects' semiotic agency (appearance), articulated into the broader concept of matter as "substance in its iterative intra-active becoming - not a thing, but a doing, a congealing of agency" (Barad 2013, 17). It is in the light of this dynamics that matter comes to have the power to (re)produce knowledge and, ultimately, to grant footing to particular ideological agendas while discarding outsiders.

It comes as no surprise then that the current medium-as-meaning ideology has subsumed the translators' agency to the objectification of language in a Translation Age where the translated text becomes technology and technology, translation (Cronin 2012, 482).

Broadly speaking, the present article argues for a different approach to discussing ideology in Translation Studies in the assumption that "any critique of ideology is in itself a property of ideology" (Debru 2010, 155; my translation). Thus, the purpose is not to unmask ideological practices in Translation Studies, but to trace the homogenizing character of contemporary (open) views of history and science within the field that increase the gap between appearance and reality through the instrumentalization of language in general and of translation in particular. In this scenario, what counts is the way a given message is encoded to meet the specific affordances of a platform. As we will see, the meaning-medium interface becomes a Wittgensteinian sign-symbol whereby the support (sign), i.e., the 'scratch' of a symbol (meaning) is engineered through processes of algorithmic truth-seeking in the form of machine-readable logical syntax. Ultimately, "[a]s the materiality of code becomes more apparent, that of human language is paradoxically suppressed" (Mitchell 2010, 27). This occurs, for example, in statistical machine translation in which "synchronous context-free grammars (SCFG) (...) derive pairs of translationally equivalent sentences". (Büchse, Vogler and Nederhof 2012, 351). We assist thus to an impending blurring of the line as regards traditional definitions of translation (cf. Rabin 1958), which involves natural languages and hybridized translational practices requiring recourse to computer programming languages to reconstruct the semiotic substrate of meaning in translated digital products.

The paper is organized as follows. Part 1 introduces the notion of pragmatic ideologies as a conceptual hub from which contemporary machine-led translation can be defined. It is argued that localization epitomizes the instrumentalization of the translator in his/her role as mediator between the medium-as-meaning and the client. Section 2 defines the concept of pragmatic epistemologies. I argue that meaning (the translated text) should be constructed on the basis of agent-based virtue epistemologies rather than on traditional belief-based epistemologies (Battaly 2008). Moreover, a critique is launched against the increasing formulation of topical epistemologies in Translation Studies, particularly in the form of empirical translation theory (Chesterman 1998). Finally, in Section 3, I endorse the notions of 'dignity as development' (Castells and Himanen 2014) as a means to reconfigure an ethical turn in Translation Studies.
2. Pragmatic ideologies

This section is an account of the intertwined character of technology-driven ontologies and techno-sciences (in the form of localization) within an empiricist paradigm that brings in its train the consolidation of pragmatic ideologies. Pragmatic ideologies pursue the constitution of networks of digitized mediums—meaning products through localization strategies. These stem from technology-driven ontologies that encompass a variety of objects that transpire over unspecified time periods and historical junctures (e.g. ontologies-as-vocabulary, e.g. Kless et al. 2014) by virtue of models of thought, language re-engineering, conceptual trends and specialized functions: “Ontologies, being a fundamental component of the Semantic Web, promote the establishment of a shared understanding between data providers and consumers in a common format that allows the automated processing of information by software agents and people” (Ashraf et al. 2014, 1157). In this regard, pragmatists remove language from its social context (its praxis) to postulate idealizations reflecting patterns of statistically relevant (linguistic) usage. This is the main difference between pragmatic ideologies of translation and ideologies of praxis applied to translation and translating. Thus, whereas the former seeks to containerize and reuse an increasing amount of database renderings, the latter attempts to reveal language as a cultural phenomenon. Pragmatic ideologies do not promote equilibrium of power, much less the real empowerment of local communities. Rather, their purpose is to create a sense of progression and delocalized advancement through semiotic consumption (cf. Oswald 2012). Viewed in this light, traditional ideologies become superfluous, since they may impair the consolidation of zero-sum games, blind self-promotion, and illusions of enhancement above the average (for a more detailed discussion of this, see Alvesson 2013). This sits well with postmodern conceptualizations of ideology defined as "forms of expression of an unreflecting contradiction of the subject in his own praxis" (Wahrig 2010, 206; my translation).

Unreasoned thinking has thus transformed Translation Studies into a techno-science with a shaky ontological basis. As a consequence, the field's attempts at grounding some truths in reality (ontology) have been limited to the extent to which its theoretical lacks can be brought into shape. This has resulted in a self-sealing dynamics in which translation theory has gained ontological seriousness about 'lacks' (what is not there but should), which, of course, does not lead to an ontological seriousness about what is true and hence, grounded in reality (see Tallant 2010, 503). It is precisely at the interface of a feeble ontology and the pursuit for ontologies that stereotypical forms of representation such as translation as pharmakon (poison and/or medicine, Derrida 1972), translation as emancipation, or as an act of liberation, to name a few (see the next section) emerge. Moreover, the Searlean division between 'brute facts' and 'institutional facts' has extended translation to the realm of institutional action: “Translation clearly qualifies as an institutional practice and translations as institutional facts” (Halverson 2008, 345)). This is, as we shall see, not devoid of commercial interest, since, once certain institutional practices associated with particular discourse types are identified, these can be controlled, standardized and marketized. All of which has given rise to materialist forms of translation (e.g. Baker 1993, 1995, 1996; Blum-Kulka 1986; Blum-Kulka and Levenston 1983; Toury 1995). A good example is empirical translation theory (Chesterman 1998). As Chesterman describes it, the move from conceptual analysis to the empirical paradigm entails the exploration of “hypothesis that can be set up on the basis of perhaps rough-and-ready definitions, trying to test claims and predictions against evidence”. (Chesterman 1998, 203). One might ask, however, which 'claims and predictions', and most importantly, what type of evidences can be satisfactorily put at the service of translation practices without positing enduring models of translation tinged with foundationalism. Chesterman's agenda is summarized in the three aims of empirical translation theory: "a) to describe what translators do, what strategies they use, under what conditions; b) to explain why they do this and to propose testable causal laws; and c) to assess the effects of translational actions on readers and cultures, and to propose testable laws of effect" (Chesterman 1998, 228). For all its apparent cogency, the arguments supporting the above tenets are invalid because they turn on an equivocation. Upon closer inspection, Chesterman's mistake seems to reside in his conflation of objectivity and quantification as a measure of scientificity. As Gaston and Galison (2007, 4) deftly note, “[o]bjectivity and quantification may sometimes diverge: for example, neither the mathematical models of planetary distances envisioned by Johannes Kepler nor those of crystal structures advanced by René-Just Haüy sought to suppress subjectivity— the sine qua non of objectivity”. Predictably, even if the scientific stature of Translation Studies could be measured by means of the quantifiable regularization of its objects, this would not make the discipline less subjective (or biased). In the words of Ghazala (2002, 159), “this means that the translator's bias is indispensable, inevitable and unavoidable. This bias can be positively plausible, invested to reflect the translator's interference only when necessary, useful, justifiable and required for good reasons”.

It appears then that the construction of scientificity in Translation Studies does not consist in removing ethos from epistemology, in other words, a way of being from a way of knowing (cf. Daston and Galison 2007, 4).
As we can see, pragmatic (materialist) forms of translation require us to ignore agents in order to prioritize those belief-based laws arrived at. This point is dramatically thrown into focus by Pym (2007, 291), as he denounces the impact of localization on Translation Studies:

As we struggle to see what localization is doing to translation, just a few things seem clear. First, the very term ‘localization’ is being used to rob ‘translation’ of its more creative or adaptational aspects. When one talks about the localization of software or websites, ‘translation’ means the interlingual replacement of natural-language sentences or phrases in tune with the narrowest of linguistic [equivalence] approaches from the 1960s or 1970s. On the face of it, equivalence has returned. Translation practice is being restricted to the kinds of decontextualized examples used in the bad old days, except that now the decontextualization is not in the examples, it is the result of the technologies used in the practice itself. A whole generation of translation theory has been undone.

This is the description of a techno-science at its crudest (spawned by an extreme form of topical epistemology devised for “a topic or subject matter” [Stewart 2007, 24]). As database ontologies and company-driven natural equivalence (cf. Pym 2007) gain momentum, the field of Translation Studies subsumes its methods and theoretical emphases to paratranslational agendas more concerned with the identification of predefined linguistic laws capable of ensuring prompt return of investment of translational products. Localization is thus advertised as ‘big business’:

Ever hear the expression ‘think global, act local?’ Well, by doing just that, localisation enables companies to launch their products in markets for which their original product would not be suitable. For this reason, it is big business. Current estimates put the value of the localisation sector in Ireland alone at over €680 million annually.

Translation can be profitable only if either wages or low or higher waged workers produce more translations per unit time. Greater speed, it is hoped, will be achieved through Internet research, archives of old translations, and translation memory programs, more chunking of texts, more division of labor among translators, terminologists, documentalists, proofreaders and software engineers, and a reduction in the time allowed for quality control. (Mossop 2006, 790).

As a consequence, forms of linguistic engineering are required, for example, lemmatization, i.e., “a subtype of grammatically simplified communication” (Everitt et al. 2007, 70). This sort of paratranslation has become the Holy Grail for those eager to simplify translation by reducing morphological, syntactic, or lexical complexity. As Everitt et al. (2007, 70), point out,

If people communicated using only lemmata (words and phrases in their citation, or dictionary, forms), automatic translation would be greatly simplified, permitting translation among thousands of languages. By combining existing resources (bilingual and multilingual dictionaries, thesauri, and glossaries), one could build a system that infers translations of arbitrary lemmata into arbitrary target languages.

This prevalence of the object over the subject robs translators of the “relational capacity that enables a social actor to influence asymmetrically the decisions of other social actor(s) in ways that favor the empowered actor’s will, interests, and values” (Castells 2009, 10). Actors are thus compelled to adapt their agency and communicative skills to the affordances of the medium. Inevitably, translators become subservient to forms of McLuhanian hybridization of “media and gadgetry that externalize the entirety of human thought and bodily experience” (Mitchell 2010, 23). Moreover, as Castells (quoted by Rantanen 2005, 142) observes,

‘The medium is the message’ means that the materiality of organizing the communication process fundamentally shapes the ways the message is going to be received. If we say that ‘The message is the medium’ means that the content of the message organizes the process of communication.

In translational terms, the medium, organized around particular object-agents, becomes a form of meaning that can be transported wholesale into no matter what context. Medium-as-meaning can therefore be reused, re-actualized, re-oriented, re-localized, reinserted, reframed, reshaped, and repackaged at will.
Given that localization also presupposes the creation self-serving temporo-spatial illusions, and the promise of linguistic and cultural advancement, in the form of new concepts, terms, or coinages, translational genuineness must be fostered to provide the medium with local flavor and, most importantly, to heed enduring relations between cultural goods (which of course cannot bring themselves into being) and consumers. The reproduction of this language game is only superficially rooted in praxis. Underlyingly, the action of translators consists only in preventing distortions which might impair the product’s acceptability (its epistemic reliability, see Section 4). Although we could be tempted to regard this network of relations as a good example of a genuine language game in the Wittgensteinian sense, localization is not really anchored in the ‘handling of life’ (cf. Ludwig Wittgenstein, Bemerkungen über die Philosophie der Psychologie 1984[1922, II], 625). What the medium-as-meaning brings to the fore is a selective shaping of ephemeral cultural trends and not a response to the needs of local communities.

3. Belief-based epistemologies vs. virtue epistemologies

As translational products are constantly created and replaced, intellectual output is cast into an epistemic determinism whereby knowledge and justification are used to evaluate certain objects about which “Designed (...) selected over generations in a natural habit, or shaped during a period of learning and reinforcement, when artifacts, traits, or behaviors have functions, we can, for the most part distinguish between functioning (operating) and fulfilling functions” (Graham 2012, 449). Ultimately, insofar as language professionals (i.e. “anyone working in a translation-related field such as translation, interpretation, terminoology and localization” [McDonough 2007, 794] fulfill properly their functions as evaluators of corporate beliefs linked to object-products within production networks, they can amass enough epistemic reliability to pursue the truths of the market. This marks continuity with the sectarian way Translation Studies relates to globalization: “Perhaps the clearest sign of our décalage with respect to globalization is the extent to which Translation Studies becomes organized along national lines” (Pym 2006, 754). Moreover, the outbreak of computer-mediated communication has increased the need for cementing particular political interests and corporate standing. Inevitably, the product’s influence and impact must be established through competitiveness and advertisement, which replaces solidarity and communication. On this ground, the efforts toward simplified forms of translation are propelled by concerns of fluency (epistemic success), invisibility (the translator’s function), and the combination of functions, norms, and standards: “[F]unctions are norms. Norms are standards. Fulfilling a function and so measuring up to a norm, is a success, fulfillment, or achievement” (Graham 2012, 461). This is crystallized by means of disciplinary integration. In other words, the definition of what amounts to a good translation is increasingly biased toward a concealment of ST-TT relations preserving the integrity of the translation’s skopos (cf. Bielsa 2007). Furthermore, the increasing embeddedness of translators within specialized areas demanding a particular ‘field knowledge’ (Li 2007) entails the avoidance of reflectivity, thereby facilitating forms of ‘audience design’ (Bell 1984). Translators are thus immersed in an endless problem-solving assembly line in which the ability to meet corporate demands is privileged over his/her epistemic agency. It is perhaps fitting that translation agencies play what game theorists call a ‘free-form game’, i.e. an evolutionary and new-knowledge-seeking game whereby rules are not given at the beginning but negotiated on the fly on the basis of predefined scenarios (Shubik 2011, 64). The rise of the medium-as-meaning, enacted by powerful technological affordances, has packaged meaning (the what) and medium (the how) into an epistemically reliable digital commodities whose value is determined by its potential to be disseminated promptly. In actual fact, medium-as-meaning points to “no transcendent meaning or informational essence beyond language” (Mitchell 2010, 23). In other words, “meanings are specific to the physical forms and material channels by which messages are inscribed and transmitted” (ibid., 23).

The resulting ‘product’ refers to a process that Cusumano (2010) summarizes in his six principles for staying power, namely platforms (not just products), services (not just products or platforms), capabilities (not just strategy), pull (not just push), scope (not just scale), and flexibility (not just efficiency). A product that escapes from the agency of the translator. As Hermans and Lambert (1998, 126) have noted, “even when work- ing within a company as in-house teams, translators are hardly ever part of the teams that plan a given product (...)”. However, translators are excluded from decision-making during the production workflow. Neither do they participate in the refereeing group (the controllers of the game), nor in the challenging group which “argue[e] for a change to other rules as being more reasonable than the current rules [during the game]” (Shubik 2012, 64).

The latter format shows the attempt to recruit the figure of translators as information managers. For example, whereas for many transnational professionals epistemic arbitrage (Seabrooke 2014, 51) plays a key role in the development of their skills in a context of corporate leverage, this is not the case for translators whose stability is tied to the reliability of the final product.
Indeed, corpus management in translation (e.g., Friedbichler and Friedbichler 2000; Jääskeläinen and Mura ranen 2004; Vantarola 2003) has become a means to develop those translational competences (Vantarola 2003, 5) required by ‘language service providers’ (LSPs). This goes to show that modern translation must continually redefine itself by reducing the inconveniences posed by reflexivity and diversity. At any rate, digitalization would seem to provide just one more continuity connecting two hardly reconciled universes, namely that of the translator living in the analog world and the digitized content they throw into the virtual reality: “It is not uncommon for a large multinational to be processing 1.5 billion words per annum for up to 500 products in over 30 languages, with the requirement that the different language versions be released simultaneously in their respective markets” (Hartley 2009, 106).

In this sense, the epistemological posture suggested herein can be best defined in terms of a virtue-based rather than a belief-based epistemology:

In belief-based epistemology, beliefs are the primary objects of epistemic evaluation, and knowledge and justification, which are evaluations of beliefs, are the fundamental concepts and properties in epistemology. In contrast, in virtue epistemology, agents rather than beliefs are the primary objects of epistemic evaluation, and intellectual virtues and vices, which are evaluations of agents, are the fundamental concepts and properties. (Battaly 2008, 640; emphasis in original).

4. Toward an ethics of translation

In this last section, I will briefly consider an ethics for Translation Studies in the context of digitized content production. I suggest that the notions of pragmatic ideology, pragmatic epistemology (a form of topical epistemology) and their corresponding translational ethics are not unrelated. Indeed, they converge on central scientific and disciplinary claims, namely the pursuit of rationality and objectivity. Clearly, without objectivity, no scientific inquiry can trace the network of conceptual relations giving sense to their practice. Nor is it possible to define an ethical stance regarding the way ‘fair’ translational practices should lead to the construction of diversity in an increasingly complex world.

Traditionally, however, the ethical fuzziness of Translation Studies has been commonly counterbalanced by way of appeals to relative positions such as feminism, liberalism, communitarianism, etc., in the assumption that embracing a popular ideological strand releases translators from the moral burdens of unreasoned practice. Moreover, this has been considered as a means to unify local ideological systems under the guise of globalized supranational ideologies of translation. Apart from obvious appeals to higher states of reasoned practice, ethics and the ideal(ized) balance between desire and sustainability, I would claim that what is needed is a more fine-grained and responsible assignment of roles that counteracts the ‘virulent spread of market fundamentalism’ (Lechner 2009, 7). We can glean from this description the fact that most claims to rationality through objectivity in Translation Studies (and their related ethics or lack thereof) are simply vested desires fuelled by contradictory definitions of belief and reliability (belief-based epistemologies). These, however, are not as objective or rational as they appear to be: “What makes our desires rational or irrational is not the rationality of the beliefs on which these desires causally depend, but the content of these beliefs, or what we believe” (Parfit 2011, 113; emphasis in original).

Of central importance not only to the translator’s epistemic entitlement but to translation and translating more generally is, in fact, the spectrum of cultural transformation in which translators must envision “the possibility of thinking beyond the limits of whatever is presented as the limiting condition of thought in [their] discipline” (Norris 2009, 33). It is precisely for this reason that “sorting out the responsibilities that are properly assigned to each agent—that is, to each level of human organization- in relation to the others constitutes a complex, intimidating task, but one that (...) is essential if we hope to avoid catastrophe” (Sherwin 2012, 23). Importantly, an ethical turn in Translation Studies (involving both human and informational development) must depart from the notion of ‘dignity as development’, i.e. “a fulfillment of human potential through sustainable economy, sustainable wellbeing, and sustainable culture” (Castells and Himanen 2014, 305).

We can see how this logic would apply to most forms of translation. In this regard, an ethical turn in Translation Studies does not simply seek to provide definitions of what is good or bad in translation, but a “focus on rights and on difference” (Engelbrecht 2012, 341). It is in this sense that the present proposal detaches itself from any exercise of intuition about intentionality as seen from the perspective of those in power: “People attribute intentionality when the effect is bad, but not when it is good” (Hindricks 2014, 52).
The present discussion, however, is clearly in tension with the spread of machine-led translation as a means to bring the benefits of globalization to those in need of expeditious access to all forms of semiotic consumption. Again, the problem is not to define whether semiotic consumption is sustainable or not, but whether the actor's agency, defined in terms of virtue epistemologies (the agent's reliability) is compatible with current reliabilist views (e.g. Goldberg 2010). Thus, whereas agents' beliefs fail to account for the whole host of forms of (distributed) cognition facilitated by non-human technological resources and affordances, the question arises as to whether the power of technological resources bestows databases of an epistemic reliability on an equal footing with human beings. Two questions must be posed here: Is it ethical to equate a search engine with its user? And, perhaps most importantly, is access to widespread technological resources (i.e. a repository of 'diversity' accessible to all) an ethics in action? As we have seen throughout this paper, the answer to question one is a plain 'no'. Not that search engines or databases are intrinsically bad. But, as many would agree, the medium serves no purpose beyond the design of their users. In this sense, the ethical agency of machines can be safely ruled-out from the ethical question. As to question two, the ethical value of a single action cannot be reduced to its purpose. In this sense, the utilitarian dictum whereby something good (useful) must be good to someone somehow, falls short, since usefulness is not the measure of utility. This is why functional reliability is not necessarily ethical for everyone. As discussed earlier in this paper, object fetishism inevitably entails the positioning of products as intrinsically endowed with an ethical dimension projected onto them by both users and consumers. These objects provide satisfaction of specific preferences which, as we have seen, are subjected to manipulation. Gaining access to the bulk of information available online is an ethical exercise provided that the user's beliefs put the resource to an ethical use. Again, this is a matter of human decision-making, and not a deliberate epistemic choice of the machine. Even when access constraints in the form of passwords and users' profiling are increasingly determined by the algorithmic goodwill of the machine, this is not a true belief-dependent process, i.e. "a cognitive process that the reliability of whose outputs are a function of the reliability of its inputs" (Goldberg 2010, 72). In other words, we should not buy the machine's testimony on the grounds of its processing capabilities. Upon closer inspection, the belief that machines can be held accountable epistemically points to unreason rather than to a measurable phenomenon. As Murphy (2013, 113-114) notes, "[p]henomena like self-deception, bias and wishful thinking are a normal part of human behaviour, and so we expect to see them, and we can even predict what some circumstances will make them likely". As significant as it might appear, however, an ethics of Translation Studies that puts the medium-as-meaning squarely at its center should privilege the reliability of the agent-translator over that of the machine. Striving toward this difficult goal begs for a sensible distinction between first-order epistemology (the study of epistemic phenomena), metaepistemology (concerned with theories, theorists and theorizers), and applied epistemology (dealing with epistemic problems and beliefs) (Michaelian 2008, 67). Such a link is indeed easy to establish insofar as it is posited as a structured conceptual path enabling actors to engage in robust cognitive processes "reliable across a wide range of environments" (Bishop and Trout 2008, 1050). Inasmuch as distinct translational epistemologies and ontologies insinuate themselves, they inevitably demarcate their object of study by being equally fair to all the participants in the process of meaning construction through translation.

5. Conclusion

In this paper I have argued that current machine-led translational practices are increasingly motivated by covert ideologies which I have termed pragmatic ideologies. It thus becomes increasingly clear that the attempt to perpetuate belief-based epistemologies (which I have termed pragmatic epistemologies) promoting the prioritization of the medium-as-meaning product over the translator, generates a number of asymmetries. One of such asymmetries, to summarize the argument elaborated above, derives from the promotion of localization, where most of the tensions between agents and commodities do occur, and the discontentment among agents due to an increasing dispossession of epistemic reliability. I have suggested that a good way to counteract the increasing invisibility of the translator in production networks is to reformulate the epistemological underside of Translation Studies through both agent-centered virtue epistemologies and an ethical turn that focus on diversity and equality, rather than on discussion about what is good or wrong for translators and translation.

Notes

1. The ontological commitment invoked here is not an absolute abstract construct, but a commitment to finding out those concepts that are necessary for a theory to be consistent and, most importantly, to figuring out a reasoning leading to finding those constructs.
2. The paradox of this is that the subject/object dualism is, in fact, inherited from metaphysics.

3. As the early Wittgenstein (1984 [1922]) observes, “Um das Symbol am Zeichen zu erkennen, muss man auf den sinnvollen Gebrauch achten” [In order to recognize a symbol in a sign, we must first recognize its meaningful use] (Tractatus Logico-philosophicus: 3.326). For the later Wittgenstein, however, “[n]ur in der Praxis einer Sprache kann ein Wort Bedeutung haben” (Bemerkungen über die Grundlagen der Mathematik, 41).

4. Here, localization is approached in the narrow sense of a “mix of computer and translation skills which are used to create localized versions of software, web pages, or other electronic information” (St. André 2006, 712).

5. Mayoral (2001, 68) has summarized some of these translational lacks. In his words, “[I]n our discipline there is no consensus to elaborate even the initial metalanguage which would make it possible to launch the discipline from a scientific basis. This is just another sign of our discipline's scarce scientificity”. Apparently, Translation Studies, or the ambiguous conception of an established field of Translation Studies (Simeoni 1998), may have well become a techno-science before even having evolved into a mature science.


7. In the words of Wittgenstein, “Das Wort 'Sprachspiel' soll hier hervorheben, daß das Sprechen der Sprache Teil ist einer Tätigkeit, oder einer Lebensform” (Philosophical Investigations 1984[1922], 23)

8. Production networks are defined as “a set of inter-firm relationships that bind a group of firms into a larger economic unit” (Sturgeon 2001, 2).

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