

**LINGUISTICS,  
ANTHROPOLOGY  
AND PHILOSOPHY  
IN THE FRENCH  
ENLIGHTENMENT**

ULRICH RICKEN



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# Linguistics, Anthropology and Philosophy in the French Enlightenment

In the long and controversial debates that unfolded among intellectuals from the seventeenth century to the French Revolution, language was affirmed as an indispensable tool of human creativity. Ulrich Ricken presents an explanation and analysis of their debates and of the influence of those debates on the development of philosophical, anthropological and social theory in the European Enlightenment.

Through his careful analyses of works by the most influential thinkers of the time, Ulrich Ricken demonstrates that the central significance of language in the philosophy of the Enlightenment both reflected and contributed to contemporary understandings of humanity as a whole. The understanding of language offered an analysis of the intellectual faculties of man and promised the articulation of a new vision of human creativity and thought.

Although principally focused on French thought between 1650 and 1800, the author also discusses developments in England, Germany and Italy and covers an unusually broad range of writers and ideas, including Leibniz, Wolff, Herder and Humboldt. This study places the history of language philosophy within the broader context of the history of ideas, aesthetics and historical anthropology and will be of interest to scholars and students working in these disciplines.

Ulrich Ricken founded and directed and is now Emeritus Professor of the International Centre for Research on the European Enlightenment at the University of Halle, Germany. He is the author of numerous books and articles on the history of ideas, the history of language, and the history of linguistic theories in their philosophical context.

Robert E. Norton is Associate Professor of German at Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, New York. He is the author of *Herder's Aesthetics and the European Enlightenment* and of articles on Lessing, Schiller and George Eliot.

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# **Linguistics, Anthropology and Philosophy in the French Enlightenment**

Language Theory and Ideology

Ulrich Ricken

Translated from the German by

Robert E. Norton



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# Contents

<i>Introduction</i>	vii
<b>Part I The overture to the Enlightenment debate: language in the interstices of the intellectual and physical nature of humanity</b>	1
<b>1 Interpretations of language as an argument for and against dualism: Descartes and his sensualistic opponents in the seventeenth century</b>	3
<b>2 Language and the affects in the Port-Royal <i>Logic</i></b>	24
<b>3 Cordemoy and dualism: consequences of a Cartesian theory of signs</b>	33
<b>4 The Cartesian argument: rationalism and empiricism in Bernard Lamy's conception of language</b>	38
<b>5 Language and sense perception in the controversy between Arnauld and Malebranche</b>	44
<b>6 Language and the epistemological evaluation of the senses from Descartes to Locke and Du Bos: the outcome of the seventeenth century</b>	51
<b>Part II Language, anthropology and history in the Enlightenment</b>	61
<b>7 A century of controversy</b>	63
<b>8 From Locke to Condillac: the development of the sensualistic theory of language</b>	70
<i>On the status of language in Locke's Essay Concerning Human Understanding</i>	70
<i>Condillac and the further development of Locke's sensualism</i>	77
<b>9 Grammar, philosophy, anthropology: the problem of word order</b>	111
<b>10 The origin of language and the historical view of humanity</b>	134
<b>11 Language and evolutionary thinking</b>	149

<b>12 The “abuse of words”</b>	160
<b>13 Language and knowledge: theoretical sources of the “Linguistic Relativity” of cognition</b>	174
<b>14 The French Enlightenment and its aftermath: linguistic theory and language debates from the Enlightenment to the Restoration</b>	191
<i>The “grammairien-patriote” Urbain Domergue</i>	192
<i>Louis-Sébastien Mercier and his “Néologie”</i>	199
<i>The Ideologues: continuation and retraction of the sensualist theory of language</i>	206
<i>The verdict of the Restoration</i>	220
<b>15 Concluding remarks: assessment of the discussion of language in the French Enlightenment</b>	226
<i>Notes</i>	233
<i>Bibliography</i>	259
<i>Index</i>	281

# Introduction

The interest in the history of academic disciplines that has increased dramatically during the last few years has caused the publications concerning the specific field of linguistics to amass in a proportionate fashion. This, in turn, has opened the discussion concerning the object and methods of a formal history of linguistics. A number of demands are being made of this venture, among them that one ought to integrate linguistics into the more general history of the humanities and that one should attend to the interaction of linguistic theories with other disciplines, such as philosophy and the natural sciences.

One must ask whether the history of linguistics can contribute to the current understanding of this discipline by revealing the factors involved in the development of linguistic thinking and laying bare its role in the abstract interrelations of ideas within the history of the humanities as a whole. Our expectation of a positive answer to this question lends the history of all academic disciplines its relevance to modern theories of their present-day counterparts.

A methodology that typically adopts the characteristics of a “hunt for predecessors” would hardly be suited to uncovering the historical motivations of inquiries into the nature of language. Rather, it runs the risk of becoming a historicizing self-confirmation of present perspectives and, to that end, of selectively isolating disparate elements of the past and wrenching them out of their historical context. A similar danger resides in modernizing historical views under the aegis of current concerns by couching them in modern linguistic terminology. Such a methodology holds out little hope of revealing the status of linguistic theory in connection with the general development of knowledge and ideology.

The dependence of linguistic theories on philosophical presuppositions has been emphasized often enough. Yet linguistic theories are not just an expression, but rather frequently the constitutive element of philosophical systems. Ever since antiquity, language has been the object of theoretical reflection within systematic philosophy. Conceptions of language were, and hence are (although perhaps today less directly so than in previous centuries)

not only co-determined by ideology and theories of disciplines, they can also count among their constitutive components. Tracing the patterns of linguistic thought within the development of the history of academic disciplines and of ideology generally speaking can thus help us focus on the conditions that enabled theories of language to assume their characteristic forms.

I have chosen as the object of such an investigation certain linguistic problems that arose within the larger debates about the status of humanity in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, for in these debates the theory of language was of the greatest consequence. As early as the seventeenth century anthropological questions were discussed in the context of linguistic reflection. And the secularized view of humanity and society that characterized the Enlightenment at its climax was intimately linked with the further development and re-evaluation of seventeenth-century language philosophy.

Although the Enlightenment has recently attracted increased attention with respect to the history of anthropology<sup>1</sup> and linguistics,<sup>2</sup> the linguistic topics of this period have until now rarely been seen in their close connection with the most important interests of the Enlightenment, particularly as regards the debate among representatives of the sensualistic and the rationalistic schools of thought. Even when it came to the question about whether matter may be capable of thought, in both the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries proponents as well as opponents of materialism used arguments drawn from the theory of language to support their views. The question of the origin of language and issues related to the relationship between language and thought were the object of lengthy debates, which then influenced later theories of evolution and contributed to the formation of a fully secularized conception of humanity and society.

The present study is organized into two main parts. The first shows a few of the important lines of development that led up to the programmatic reception of Locke's sensualism in France. The linguistic thought dependent on the Cartesian dualism between spirit and matter went in two different and even opposite directions. But even the contradictory conceptions of humanity advocated by Descartes and his sensualistic opponents were formulated in terms that had relevance for language theory as well.

The second, more extensive part treats those lines of development in language theory that were significant for anthropology and social theory from the seventeenth century to the Restoration. The conception of language that was achieved as part of the general secularization of thought during the eighteenth century was rejected by the leading lights of the Restoration in France, whose counter-revolutionary program included the condemnation of all manifestations of Enlightenment, whether expressed in language theory, literature or philosophy.

With the exception of the sections on the "abuse of words" (Chapter 12) and the discussion of neology (Chapter 14), in which it is important to cite the French terminology in question, all longer quotations from French texts

are rendered in English. Only when the French passage is especially important have I quoted it with its translation.<sup>3</sup> The present translations are based on the French originals, or were corrected in consultation with the original text.

Chapter 13 on “Language and knowledge: theoretical sources on the ‘Linguistic Relativity’ of thought,” as well as the section on the Ideologues in Chapter 14, was written with the co-operation of Gerda Haßler. For help in the preparation of the final manuscript I thank Regina Harloff, Sabine Schwarze, Käthe Herrmann, Sigrid Hoffmann, Christine Renneberg, and especially Susanne Thomaschewski. In addition, I am grateful to Heidrun Wöllenweber for having prepared the bibliography and the index for the original book. I also express my gratitude to the directorship of the Department of Linguistics and Literary Science at the Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg for its support of my work. Anneliese Funke helped to improve the original manuscript in numerous ways through her professional editorial care.



# **Part I**

**The overture to the  
Enlightenment debate:  
language in the interstices of  
the intellectual and physical  
nature of humanity**



# **1 Interpretations of language as an argument for and against dualism: Descartes and his sensualistic opponents in the seventeenth century**

Previous interpreters of Descartes's observations on language have rarely attempted to determine their status and function<sup>1</sup> within the framework of his entire philosophy. Any endeavor to show that Descartes's theoretical views of language depend upon his doctrine of innate ideas and a universal "raison" must remain fragmentary if one does not also consider his dualistic system and the arguments that had already surrounded that system during Descartes's lifetime.

The fact that Descartes and his followers explicitly advanced linguistic theories in order to argue for the dualism of spirit and matter has hardly been considered before. Nor has it been recognized that linguistic theories were likewise proposed by his opponents, although they proceeded from a sensualistic conception of thought and human nature as a whole. The relevance of an interpretation of language for such a major philosophical problem as the determination of the relationship between the physical and intellectual elements in human nature must be included in any consideration of the various problems relating to language that were discussed in France during the seventeenth century. By examining this controversy and its ramifications for the thinkers who came after Descartes, we may be able to classify more precisely in historical terms the debate that occurred in the following century. For it was during this period that the confrontation between a sensualistic and a rationalistic view of humanity took place primarily in the form of theoretical arguments about the nature of language itself.

By way of introduction, I will sketch here a few of the philosophical and scientific presuppositions that informed linguistic discourse in the seventeenth century. In so doing, I will consider the much-discussed concepts of "raison," "imagination," and "passion," which were important concepts not only in theories of language; they also underline the connection between linguistics and reflections on anthropology, epistemology, and aesthetics.

When, in 1671, attacks against Descartes's philosophy reached their highest pitch in France, and the Sorbonne sought measures to have it

#### 4 *Interpretations of language*

banned, a burlesque text circulated in Paris that parodied these efforts to forbid the entrance of “raison” into the sciences. Yet the text does not cite the Cartesians as being first among the advocates of a new conception of science. It lists, rather, the Gassendists as the prime “offenders,” and the Jansenists were placed on a level equivalent to both. In doing so, the pamphlet identified the three main schools that played crucial roles in the philosophical debates that took place during the second half of the seventeenth century. All three shared a sense of opposition to the official universities, at the head of which stood the Sorbonne. The university was the undisputed center of power within the scholastic tradition. As the guardian of true faith and highly conscious of its mission to preserve the well-being of the state, it assiduously resisted all innovations within science, philosophy, and religion it considered dangerous.

The most powerful impetus for a new orientation in philosophical and scientific thought in France during the seventeenth century unquestionably came from Descartes, but not from him alone. The Jansenists, whose non-conformist stance in religious as well as political matters aroused the displeasure of the ruling powers, had combined a dependence upon Descartes with a declaration of allegiance to the teachings of Augustine. The center of Jansenism was the Parisian cloister of Port-Royal, where Jansenist authors edited the *Grammar* and *Logic* which are usually cited in connection with that name. The most significant representatives of Jansenism were Blaise Pascal, who died at a very early age, and the contentious Antoine Arnauld, who wrote numerous philosophical and religious tracts. Above all, Arnauld was able to give currency to his interests in the philosophy of language through his advisory role to Claude Lancelot, the editor of the Port-Royal *Grammar*, and even more so as the governing author of the Port-Royal *Logic*, which includes a substantially larger number of questions pertaining to the philosophy of language than does the *Grammar*.

Those Gassendists who, in the burlesque pamphlet, were the principal representatives of “raison” and the new science, even before the aforesaid Cartesians and Jansenists, were emphatically rejected by Descartes and his followers, together with the Jansenists. Gassendi’s sensualism stood in marked opposition not only to Descartes’s rationalism, but also to the religious attitudes of the Jansenists by virtue of their debt to Cartesianism and Augustinianism. These conflicts point to the distinctiveness and complexity of the forms in which a new scientific thinking manifested itself as an expression of the emerging bourgeois “Weltanschauung.”

It is perhaps of no small interest that the author of the burlesque pamphlet against the Sorbonne was none other than Boileau, who soon thereafter summarized the canon of classical French literature in his *Art poétique* (1674).<sup>2</sup> Racine, who like Boileau was involved in Jansenism, was probably a co-author of the pamphlet, as was Bernier, who was a follower and propagator of Gassendi’s philosophy.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, Molière was busy editing a comedy that parodied the Sorbonne’s resistance to the new

conception of science and its implications. And La Fontaine's fables, which contain direct references to the antagonism between the Gassendists and the Cartesians, provide literary testimony to his decided sympathy toward Gassendi's sensualism.<sup>4</sup>

It is clear from Boileau's position against the Sorbonne's plan to ban Cartesian philosophy that the concept of "raison," which was held to be in opposition to the scholastic scientific tradition, applied equally to the Jansenists, Cartesians and Gassendists, and that it therefore could not be strictly viewed as a concept stemming solely from Cartesian rationalism. It was, rather, a "raison" that was conceived as being part of a general, healthy "common sense," a "raison" whose advocates in classical French literature could proclaim their allegiance to any one of these three philosophical camps. In seventeenth-century France, the appeal to reflect upon the powers of human understanding, which was an expression of growing bourgeois self-confidence that was being carried out in the name of "raison," had, to be sure, found its most representative formulation in the writings of Descartes, but it was not reserved for the Cartesians alone.

In the debate concerning linguistic questions, too, the catchword of "raison" came into the foreground. The polarity between "raison" and "imagination" or, in another realm of debate the opposition between "raison" and "imagination" (or "passion"), illustrates ideas that led to an interest in language that was supported by sociological and philosophical concerns. A different concept of "raison," however, comes into play in each case.

The effort to determine the relationship between "raison" and "usage" within language touched closely upon the problem of the socially exemplary norms of the French language. When, in the sixteenth century, the nationally conscious humanistic scholar Henri Estienne criticized the language of French courtiers as being overburdened and alienated by Italianisms, he demanded that one ought to measure their ostensibly exemplary "usage" by the criteria of "raison," of which positive traces could be found in the linguistic usage of other levels of society.<sup>5</sup> And when, in the seventeenth century, Vaugelas proclaimed the language spoken by both the court elite and by writers to be the normative "good speech" ("bon usage"), he lent an even more strongly pronounced sociological component to the relevance which, ever since the sixteenth century, linguistic consciousness in France had increasingly acquired with regard to the national consciousness (*Remarques sur la langue française*, 1647). If the most esteemed writers were placed alongside the members of the court as the representatives of exemplary linguistic usage, then this was as such a confirmation of the bourgeoisie as a culturally formative force. Yet the literature of French classicism, which was after all produced by representatives of the bourgeoisie, nevertheless remained beholden to the standard of the court, just as absolutism generally represented a form of compromise between the still ruling feudal class and the emerging bourgeoisie.

Bringing both social forces together under the rubric of "la Cour et la

Ville,” or of Versailles and Paris, was an attempt to reveal the cultural standards common to both. But the growing self-confidence of the bourgeoisie also put the dominance of Versailles into question with respect to the “bon usage.” The Port-Royal *Grammar* itself bears witness to this claim in that, in comparison to Vaugelas, it presents a completely different conception of linguistic usage and places it in another relation to “raison” long before Antoine Arnauld openly, and in polemical opposition to Vaugelas, demanded the equality of Parisian linguistic norms with those of the court.<sup>6</sup>

In this constellation of social forces, the traditional opposition between “usage” and “raison” received, in relation to the problem of a linguistic norm, a philosophical component that was dependent upon the sociological one. To be sure, for Vaugelas and even in the Port-Royal *Grammar*, “raison,” in its opposition to “usage,” usually meant hardly more than the observance of the rules of logic or linguistic analogy.<sup>7</sup> Yet precisely because of this fact, an approach was made to that general concept of “raison” which, as an appeal to the powers of human understanding, was attributed in the debate sketched above just as much to the Gassendists and the Jansenists as it was to the Cartesians.

There is further evidence that a general concept of “raison” played an important role as a form of expression for the emerging social forces in the seventeenth century in that the terminology with which Vaugelas presented the “bon usage” exhibits unmistakable parallels to feudalistic common law.<sup>8</sup> The “bon usage” was legitimated as the dominant linguistic usage owing to the simple fact that it represented the language of the rulers, and it therefore required no justification through “raison”—“usage’ does many things through reason, many without reason, and many counter to reason” (“*l’usage fait beaucoup de choses par raison, beaucoup sans raison, et beaucoup contre raison.*”)<sup>9</sup>

The normative character of the “bon usage” resulted directly from its opposition to the “poor speech” (“mauvais usage”), which was understood as characterizing the speech of the people. And it is precisely for this reason that the claim for the sovereignty of the “bon usage” was just as unlimited as the social claims of its speakers. Vaugelas thus very emphatically rejected the assertion that the people were the speakers of language and “usage.” In the opinion of Vaugelas, the etymological appeal to Latin to support the claim that “the entire jurisdiction” of linguistic usage belonged to the people overlooked the fundamental difference of meaning between “populus” and “people,” for the latter corresponds merely to the Latin “plebs.” The language of the common people, however, can only be the “mauvais usage,” a judgment Vaugelas emphasized by large print: “ACCORDING TO US, THE PEOPLE ARE THE MASTERS ONLY OF POOR SPEECH, AND GOOD SPEECH IS THE MASTER OF OUR LANGUAGE” (“SELON NOUS, LE PEUPLE N’EST LE MAÎTRE QUE DU MAUVAIS USAGE, ET LE BON USAGE EST LE MAÎTRE DE NOTRE LANGUE”).<sup>10</sup>

After such a massive sociological justification of the “bon usage,” and after the broad echo that Vaugelas’s ideas had found (his *Remarques* were reprinted at least ten times from 1647 to 1660, the latter date being the year of publication of the Port-Royal *Grammar*), the complete absence of the concept of “bon usage” in the Port-Royal *Grammar* was already an expression of a conscious rejection of the norm-setting role of the court elite—even though it was not yet overtly attacked.

Two years later, the Port-Royal *Logic* openly initiated this attack by categorically criticizing the habit of seeing an embodiment of correct and therefore exemplary thought and behavior in the representatives of the highest levels of society. In this sociological context the observation also followed that there were people who can speak better than they can think, while with others it was precisely the reverse. Vaugelas’s reference to the practice of the court—that a false word is easier to notice and therefore more intrusive than a false idea<sup>11</sup>—is thus transformed here into social criticism, and the courtly ideal of “speaking well” (“bien parler”) is devalued as a merely superficially captivating manner of speaking.

The Port-Royal *Grammar* represented a completely different conception of a linguistic norm, for it attempted to establish a new relationship between “usage” and “raison.” A recognition of the general consensus of linguistic usage thus replaced the old habit of positing the norms embodied in the aristocracy as universally valid (“*l’usage général et non contesté, l’usage présent de notre langue, l’usage ordinaire de notre langue*”). It was just this “usage”—that is, the generally accepted linguistic usage—with which the Port-Royal *Grammar* was concerned so as to determine the role of “raison” in its formation. It intended to reveal, as far as it was possible to do so, an inner logic of language instead of simply accepting linguistic usage as a given. If the “usage ordinaire de notre langue” replaced the concept of the “bon usage” and one sought its greatest possible agreement with “raison,” then this also indicated the formulation of a demand on the part of the emerging bourgeoisie, in which it presented its own views on the most varied subjects as being at the same time universally human or social concerns.

Clearly, the problem of “usage” and “raison” was also relevant to anthropology. Yet, as we have seen, the social role of linguistic norms stood in the foreground of interest. However, the opposition of “raison” to both “imagination” and “passion,” which were also emphasized in linguistic theories, finally shifted anthropological aspects into the center of the debate.

Frequently repeated reference to human understanding, together with appeals for the study and mastery of the forces of nature—regardless of whether they were formulated from a rationalistic or sensualistic point of view—also implicitly demanded a new definition of human nature as a whole. The question posed by both philosophical schools concerning the roles played by the intellectual and physical elements in human nature was at the same time a question pertaining to humanity’s position in the universe.

## 8 *Interpretations of language*

For while the world was certainly still seen as being governed by divine providence, its regulation according to its own natural laws was, simultaneously, being recognized and investigated to an ever greater degree.

Descartes's dualistic doctrine of the two fundamentally different substances of spirit and matter provided answers to these questions that were completely different from those offered by Gassendi's sensualistic philosophy, even though the effort was common to both to secure an agreement between their new conceptions of science and existing religious views.

Language itself represented, however, a point of convergence in all of the philosophical systems of the seventeenth century, a point at which the unification of the intellectual and physical characteristics of humanity most clearly manifested itself. As material signs that are clearly brought forth by the body and which can only be perceived in a physical or sensual fashion, linguistic sounds are also the most important form of expression available to the human intellect. What conclusions can be drawn about the essence of these human characteristics, or, in the parlance of that time, of the "soul," from the nature of language? In what relation do physical or sensuous linguistic signs stand to the different manifestations of the human psyche, ranging from the emotions to the highest forms of the intellect?<sup>12</sup>

Several thinkers broadened the assumption that thought depended upon material linguistic signs, which they formulated as a sensualistic response to Descartes, to include the hypothesis that thought had a primarily physical nature and that matter was capable of thought. And this same philosophical constellation gave new relevance to the traditional question of whether or not animals possessed "language," or some capacity of conscious communication. A positive answer entailed the assumption of conscious psychic activity on the part of animals and thus the necessity of calling into question, or at least delimiting, the absolutely unique status of humanity in the universe. In addition, within the framework described by the assumptions of dualism, the hypothesis of a true capacity for communication in animals opened the way for the conclusion, which Bayle termed "very dangerous," that matter was capable of thought.<sup>13</sup>

In anthropological, epistemological, aesthetic, and linguistic reflections, the concepts "raison," "imagination" and "passion" were marked by the tension between rationalistic and sensualistic views. The question was asked whether an innate "raison," or rather the physical world of human experience and the cognitive faculties that grew out of this experience, were responsible for the functioning of thought and language. This problem, which was typical of seventeenth-century anthropology and was addressed during the Enlightenment as well, had consequences for the interpretation of the essence of language, the nature of thought, and hence of humanity itself.

I shall begin by recalling a few of the fundamental characteristics of Cartesian dualism in order to show how the beginnings of a linguistic theory follow from Descartes's writings.

"In his physics, Descartes had lent matter an independent creative power

and had understood mechanical movement as its vital act. He had completely separated his physics from his metaphysics. Within his physics, matter is the sole substance, the only ground of being and knowledge. Thus French mechanistic materialism aligned itself with Descartes's physics, as opposed to his metaphysics."<sup>14</sup>

With these words, Marx and Engels characterized Descartes's doctrine of the physical world as being a source of French Enlightenment materialism. Indeed, Descartes's philosophy had already been suspected of being materialistic during his lifetime. And Descartes must have been very concerned to delimit the compromises his philosophy would suffer through the bold interpretations coming from the circle of his own followers, among whom Regius and others speculated that he had consciously formulated his metaphysics as an orthodox cover for his physics.<sup>15</sup> A materialistic programmatic treatise of the Enlightenment such as La Mettrie's *L'homme machine* (1748) then claimed that Descartes's doctrine of the two substances had been an elaborate effort to trick the theologians, since Descartes had really believed in matter that was capable of independent motion, thought and communication, but that he had not dared to express his true opinion.<sup>16</sup>

Descartes's postulate of two fundamentally different substances, the "res cogitans" and the "res extensa," was indeed on the one hand a challenge to study the physical and material world, and on the other an expression of the wish for agreement with a religious world-view that he had always endeavored to acknowledge. Descartes, who understood himself above all as a natural scientist, thus applied his mechanical physics to the "res extensa," or to the physical and material world, which included the bodies of all living beings. His metaphysics, however, postulated before matter the non-corporeal "res cogitans" as the form of existence of God and of the human soul.

In his anthropology, Descartes thus attempted to explain the connection between both substances as the unity of body and soul as it is realized in humanity. Among all living creatures, only in human beings is a union of these two substances achieved, for an immaterial, and thus immortal, soul is joined to the human body. Yet human beings are therefore also furnished with the ability to think, whereas, according to Descartes, all other animate creatures are, as purely physical beings, mere *automatons*. If Descartes's "cogito ergo sum" emphasized the human self as a purely intellectual being that is merely joined to a body, then he considered the human body, like that of all other living creatures, to be a *machine* that as such functions according to the laws of mechanics.

Descartes's postulate of innate ideas as a form of thinking that is independent of both physical existence and experience, and which ultimately has its origin in supernatural creation, corresponds to the assumption that a universal and timeless "raison" exists as the basis of thought. Descartes thus saw in language a mere instrument for the communication of ideas whose existence is entirely independent of linguistic signs.

The distinction between “pure” thought and those cognitive faculties that occur only through the union of body and soul already had an effect on Descartes’s own view of language, but even more so on those who subsequently discussed the problem. Descartes opposed “intellection pure,” as an activity of the soul that took place completely independently of the body, to the cognitive faculties of “passion” and “imagination” that were engendered by the body. Descartes gave an explanation for these physically contingent cognitive forms within the scope of his mechanistic-corpuscular conception of the organism:<sup>17</sup> In the human body, as in that of animals, sensual impressions are carried through the nerves to the brain through tiny corpuscles (“*esprits animaux*”) and there cause mechanical changes, which then trigger reflexive movements in the bodily organs. In animals, all movements of the body occur on this mechanical-automatic level. The soul that is given to the human body, however, actively perceives the impressions that are transmitted to the brain by physical processes and has itself the capability to cause mechanical changes in the brain, from which movements are then produced in the body.

Compared to pure thought, the cognitive faculties engendered by the body act as opaque conditions of consciousness and are burdened by the imperfection of knowledge that is connected with the senses. They thus require correction by pure thought and by the volitional powers of the soul. Descartes saw a proof for the necessity of innate ideas in the inadequacy of sensually produced thought, for only with the aid of innate ideas was it possible to correct the more or less imprecise impressions of the senses.

“Passions” are all of those movements of the soul that are produced by physical perceptions; the “passions,” in other words, encompass all emotional forms of experience. They comprise the most varied affects, such as amazement, hope, fear, love, loyalty, pride, etc. Since in this case the soul itself is the part that is moved, they are called “passions,” as opposed to the “actions” of the soul, which have their origin in the soul itself. The “passions” represent the indispensable connecting links for the co-operation of body and soul. With their aid, an agreement between the wishes of the soul and the movements of the body is accomplished, since they enable the guiding intervention of the soul in the actions of the body. They are thus by definition good. Their misuse is prevented by the fact that they are for the most part directed by rational reflection and the will.

The “imagination” is the impression of a sensuous perception in the brain; indeed, the operation of the “imagination” usually consists in the revival of this impression in the absence of the object that originally caused it, and the “imagination” is thus the intellectual “representation” of the respective object. The well-known examples Descartes used to explain the difference between “imagination” and “intellection pure” are the triangle and the polygon. In the “imagination,” the triangle is connected with a sensuous representation; in pure thought, however, it is the idea, free of any sensuous

representation, of three intersecting lines. The more complicated a geometric figure is, the clearer the distinction is between sensually dependent and pure thought. A millegon, or a thousand-sided polygon, is in pure thought just as clear and easily grasped an idea as a triangle, whereas in the “imagination” it can only call forth a confused representation that would hardly be distinguishable from other polygons, such as one with ten thousand sides, and so on. Descartes’s use of the term “imagination” is certainly not free of contradictions, and even in his mathematical demonstrations he frequently made recourse to the notion of the sensuous faculty of representation.<sup>18</sup> And, following the terminological usage of his time, he also designated the same processes that were triggered in animals as “imagination” and “passion,” even though he considered these to be purely instinctive and mechanical events.

Descartes’s comments on linguistic problems are scattered throughout various of his texts. They primarily refer to the nature of thought and its relation to the physical organization of humanity: the arbitrary character of the linguistic sign, the physiological processes that are connected to thinking and speaking, the linguistic signs that are produced by the body as the non-corporeal soul’s instrument for communicating, language as the expression of “raison” and, in this capacity, as the mark distinguishing human beings from animals. Descartes’s brief reflections on the polysemy of such words as “soul” (“âme”) and “spirit” (“esprit”) also concern the body and soul problem in that they point out that the ambiguity of these words makes it difficult to comprehend the nature of thought.<sup>19</sup> It is thus characteristic of almost all of Descartes’s comments on language that he referred to the postulates of his dualism.

Descartes interpreted the arbitrary character of the linguistic sign, and did so explicitly in reference to the dualism of spirit and matter, when he underscored the fundamental difference between thought and the material series of sounds used to designate and communicate thoughts. He saw a physiological aspect in the combination of phonetic form and meaning when he determined that those *movements* of the soul which are triggered by words perceived in the brain by either acoustic or written means are habitually associated with the meaning of these words. Learning a language thus consists in the acquisition of this habit.<sup>20</sup> Descartes therefore saw language functioning on the level of the corporeally codetermined “imagination” and memory, the latter being, in turn, dependent upon the “imagination.” The two texts in which Descartes discussed linguistic problems most fully are his response to the proposal for a universal language, and those several pages in his *Discours de la méthode* (1637) which deal with the body and soul problem.

In the case of the first text, in a letter to Mersenne of 1629, Descartes was reacting to some theses concerning the project for a universal language.<sup>21</sup> It has not been possible to identify either the letter from Mersenne which Descartes answered, or the project for a universal language

about which Mersenne informed him. Naturally, this makes the interpretation of Descartes's own text even more difficult.

As his rationalistic point of departure would lead one to expect, Descartes was fundamentally in accord with the project for a universal language. However, in addition to suggestions for a simplification of grammar, he expressed several objections concerning the feasibility of such a project. Among his reservations was the important argument that the rules of phonetic harmony, which were different even from language to language, only allowed combinations of sounds that were in each case specific to that language (an idea that had possibly been suggested to him by Mersenne's intensive work on the problem of phonetic harmony in music, as well as in language). Thus, if the phonetic harmony of a newly-created universal language would be based on the peculiarities of one's native language, it would in this respect have the characteristics of a foreign language for the citizens of other nations. A universal language whose phonetic rules would be appropriate for speakers of each individual language therefore seemed hardly conceivable.

As a hypothetical alternative, Descartes suggested a form of conceptual notation that was modelled after mathematics (a project that Leibniz continued, after finding encouragement in works by Dalgarno and Wilkins, by proposing universal sign systems that functioned as instruments of communication and as cognitive aids lacking the inadequacies of natural languages). In Descartes's opinion, such a form of conceptual notation could be made comprehensible to the speakers of the various individual or national languages only if it were listed in a polyglot dictionary as an equivalent to those languages.

A universal written language that was derived from the system of mathematical signs and numbers would presuppose, however, that philosophy first provided the precise system of human concepts which would then be designated by the universal language. This written language would therefore be nothing other than the supplementary graphic fixation of the method of correct thinking. If that were possible, one ought to be able to identify the science that would help even peasants judge things better than the philosophers before them had done. But Descartes declared this project to be illusionary.<sup>22</sup>

The *Discours de la méthode* contains Descartes's most comprehensive comments on language. In it he not only integrated language into his rationalistic explanation of the co-operation of body and soul; rather, he argued for dualism, particularly from the viewpoint of a religious justification of the Cartesian system. I am speaking of a section that summarizes parts of a work that, although written long before, had not been published until then (*Le traité de l'homme*, 1633). Descartes indicated that he had been working on this text for several years (it is part of his treatise, *Le monde* (1633)), but that he did not yet want to publish it since it touched on religious problems about which there were varying opinions.<sup>23</sup>

As he himself stated, Descartes decided to forgo publication under the impress of Galileo's conviction in 1633, especially since he had not been conscious of any irreligious traits in Galileo's philosophy before his conviction. Descartes thus feared religiously motivated objections to his own mechanical and corpuscular world-view. For he also explained in detail that the human body was a *machine* that functioned according to the laws of mechanics. In the *Discours de la méthode* we thus find merely a summary of his text on humanity, and even then with an emphatically apologetic accentuation. This section is therefore marked by the concern, with which Descartes was often preoccupied, to secure an agreement between his physics, which was dedicated to the study of the physical world, and religious belief by aligning his science with a dualistic system.

A dualistic interpretation of language was therefore supposed to strengthen dualism and its orthodoxy and to dismiss dangerous interpretations that the body and soul problem could cause by describing the human and animal body as a *machine* with a self-active regulation of its vital functions. In this way, one could interpret both the physical and arbitrary character of the linguistic sign as proof of immaterial thought and, in the same context, one could deduce that animals were mere automatons without any capacity for feeling, thinking, or true communication.

In the following, I will liberally quote from these passages in the *Discours de la méthode* in order to enable us to incorporate them into the Cartesian system; this will clarify the intention and status of Descartes's observations on language. In a very concise manner, and with repeated reference to language, he formulated those problems of his philosophy here that were, directly or indirectly, at the center of controversy in later debates about language.

Descartes prefaced his explicit treatment of language by summarizing his mechanistic-physiological explanation of those human behavioral and cognitive faculties which are corporeally determined and for which the brain serves as the central point of mediation, thus making the human body, even considering all of its complexity, appear to be a perfect automaton:

I indicated what changes must occur in the brain in order to cause waking, sleep and dreams; how light, sounds, smells, tastes, heat and the other qualities of external objects can imprint various ideas on the brain though the mediation of the senses; and how hunger, thirst, and the other internal passions can also send their ideas there. And I explained which part of the brain must be taken to be the "common" sense, where these ideas are received; the memory, which preserves them; and the corporeal imagination, which can change them in various ways, form them into new ideas, and by distributing the animal spirits to the muscles, make the parts of this body move in as many different ways as the parts of our bodies can move without being guided by the will, and in a manner which is just as appropriate to the objects of the senses and the internal passions. This

will not seem at all strange to those who know how many kinds of automatons, or moving machines, the skill of human beings can construct with the use of very few parts, in comparison with the great multitude of bones, muscles, nerves, arteries, veins and all the other parts that are in the body of any animal. For they will regard this body as a machine which, having been made by the hands of God, is incomparably better ordered than any machine that can be devised by human beings and contains in itself movements more wonderful than those in any such machine.<sup>24</sup>

Precisely in order to distinguish human beings from mere automatons, Descartes then made reference to language, which he also viewed from a mechanistic perspective. His inclusion of all living creatures, including human beings, into his physical approach led him to consider the possibility of building an automaton that would be able to produce the sounds of human language. Automatons that were thus constructed in imitation of the human *machine* could even bring forth series of sounds that were reactions to the corporeal influences to which they were exposed. Nevertheless, they would be purely mechanical reactions, for these kinds of artificial machines would be incapable of conforming to a conversational situation or of participating in a dialogue that even the most limited human being would be able to carry on—an ability that could not be deduced from physical or mechanical processes. This hypothesis thus primarily served as confirmation both of the mere mechanism of animal behavioral patterns and of the special status of human “raison.”

I made special efforts to show that if any such machines had the organs and outward shape of a monkey or of some other animal that lacks reason, we should have no means of knowing that they did not possess entirely the same nature as these animals; whereas if any such machines bore a resemblance to our bodies and imitated our actions as closely as possible for all practical purposes, we should still have two very certain means of recognizing that they were not real men. The first is that they could never use words, or put together other signs, as we do in order to declare our thoughts to others. For we can certainly conceive of a machine so constructed that it utters words, and even utters words which correspond to bodily actions causing a change in its organs (e.g. if you touch it in one spot it asks what you want of it, if you touch it in another it cries out that you are hurting it, and so on). But it is not conceivable that such a machine should produce different arrangements of words so as to give an appropriately meaningful answer to whatever is said in its presence, as the dullest of men can do.<sup>25</sup>

Only after this argument, which was made regarding linguistic performance, did Descartes also emphasize these automatons’ inability to adapt to different

situations in which humans, because they possess reason, are able to orient themselves. To be sure, one might be able to read into Descartes's formulation a merely quantitative differentiation between the behavior of mechanisms and humans, since he equated the power of "raison" with the effect of a number of organs. Yet this number is so great that it would be simply unimaginable for the construction of a machine. Thus the mechanistic view does in fact necessitate that absolute qualitative difference which the dualistic theory of substance requires.

Secondly, even though such machines might do some things as well as we do them, or perhaps even better, they would inevitably fail in others, which would reveal that they were acting not through understanding but only from the disposition of their organs. For whereas reason is a universal instrument which can be used in all kinds of situations, these organs need some particular disposition for each particular action; hence it is for all practical purposes impossible for a machine to have enough different organs to make it act in all the contingencies of life in the way in which our reason makes us act.<sup>26</sup>

Descartes again returned to the criterion of language as the distinguishing mark between humans and beasts in order to characterize animals as automatons that are just as devoid of reason as the artificial machines that had been built in imitation of humans. The reference to the anatomical requirements for the production of language that are present in some animals was cited for a long time thereafter as an argument that the human ability to use language did not rest on some particular aptitude of the human organism and for that reason could only be explained as the effect of a non-corporeal substance.

Now in just these two ways we can also know the difference between man and beast. For it is quite remarkable that there are no men so dull-witted or stupid—and this includes even madmen—that they are incapable of arranging various words together and forming an utterance from them in order to make their thoughts understood; whereas there is no other animal, however perfect and well-endowed it may be, that can do the like. This does not happen because they lack the necessary organs, for we see that magpies and parrots can utter words as we do, and yet they cannot speak as we do: that is, they cannot show that they are thinking what they are saying. On the other hand, men born deaf and dumb, and thus deprived of speech-organs as much as the beasts or even more so, normally invent their own signs to make themselves understood by those who, being regularly in their company, have the time to learn their language. This shows not merely that the beasts have less reason than men, but that they have no reason at all. For it patently requires very little reason to be able to speak...<sup>27</sup>

A further argument against the existence of linguistic ability in animals is the strict differentiation between linguistic signs and natural movements, or the signs accompanying the passions, which are thus physically determined conditions and performed by animals in the same way as they occur in the machine of the human body. Descartes's firm stance against the opinion that animals possessed an ability to use language, which ancient writers had also held, was at the same time directed primarily against Montaigne and Charron, whose advocacy of the recognition of the intelligence and language of animals remained fresh in the memory of seventeenth-century writers. His argument—that if animals really had a language at their disposal they would be able to communicate with humans just as well as with their own kind—recalled Gassendi's irony concerning this circular conclusion.<sup>28</sup>

And we must not confuse speech with the natural movements which express passions and which can be imitated by machines as well as by animals. Nor should we think, like some of the ancients, that the beasts speak, although we do not understand their language. For if that were true, then since they have many organs that correspond to ours, they could make themselves understood by us as well as by their fellows.<sup>29</sup>

If the absence of linguistic ability in animals proves the absence of their ability to think, then the much-discussed perfect facility that animals demonstrate in performing particular tasks is also no sign of intelligence. It can only be an expression of the special disposition of their organs, that is of the construction of their machine. After all, humans build clocks whose mechanisms record time much more precisely than they are able to do themselves.

The result of these arguments concerning the human and animal body and the signs that both produce was the realization that the reason-endowed soul of human beings cannot be explained by any mechanisms and thus cannot be deduced from the forces of matter even though the soul must be closely aligned with the body in order to have sensations and drives and thereby to constitute the true human being (“*et ainsi composer un vrai homme*”).<sup>30</sup>

The warning, which Descartes expressed in the same breath, not to underestimate the absolutely unique status of the human soul underscores again his concern to prove the orthodoxy of his philosophy:

Here I dwelt a little upon the subject of the soul, because it is of the greatest importance. For after the error of those who deny God, which I believe I have already adequately refuted, there is that of imagining that the souls of the beasts are of the same nature as ours, and hence that after this present life we have nothing to fear or to hope for, any more than flies and ants. But when we know how much the beasts differ from us, we understand much better the arguments which prove that our soul is of a nature entirely independent of the body, and consequently that it

is not bound to die with it. And since we cannot see any other causes which destroy the soul, we are naturally led to conclude that it is immortal.<sup>31</sup>

These comments in the *Discours* show with great clarity that Descartes deduced those qualities of human language which he had emphasized from his own conception of human nature—that is, from within the framework of his rationalistic dualism of body and spirit—in order thereby to derive proofs for the postulates of this very dualism.

In the treatise *Les passions de l'âme*, which Descartes dedicated to the exposition of his doctrine of the role of the affects in the interplay of body and soul, he again referred to language to support his philosophical postulate by way of his dualistic interpretation of language. The arbitrary character of linguistic signs, their complete dissimilarity to the ideas they signify, proves without a doubt, he thought, that human beings are able to control their “passions” instead of being at their mercy. We have after all learned and even made it a habit to perceive in the words we both hear and read something entirely different from just the mechanical effect which the phonetic series or the letters of these words have on our brain. The soul is thus able, while both speaking and listening, to combine an intellectual act with a purely physical process, and it is at the same time itself able to cause or direct physical events so as to place them in the service of intellectual actions, such as the transmission of ideas. It therefore follows that in other cases the soul must also be capable of ensuring that the body with which it is united does not answer all sense impressions with mechanical reactions. Rather, the volitional powers of the soul can consciously react to sense impressions and thus govern the affects as well as the behavior of the body.<sup>32</sup>

Immediately following the publication of the *Discours de la méthode*, the objection was raised that one would have to allow that animals also possessed intellectual and communicative capabilities. By denying that these capabilities, and hence a soul, existed in animals, one delivered an argument into the hands of the atheists that would allow them to deny the existence of the human soul, since the mechanism of the human body and thus all of its functions would then be conceivable without the assistance of an immaterial substance.<sup>33</sup>

A few years later, the body and soul problem once more assumed a central position in Descartes's work, this time in the *Méditations métaphysiques* (1641), in which he summarized the postulates of his philosophy. The explicit formulation of his wish that even the Sorbonne would approve of the theses of his *Méditations* again shows his efforts to guarantee his philosophy every possible backing by confirming its orthodoxy. Mersenne saw to it that answers were provided by several important authors whom Descartes had challenged in his work. Among the authors of these responses to the *Méditations* were Hobbes, Gassendi, and Antoine Arnauld, who, as opposed to the first two, largely identified with Descartes and

wished for his objections to be understood as an exhortation to provide a more convincing justification of the basic rationalistic position.

The arguments by Gassendi and Hobbes make clear the opposition between sensualistic and rationalistic epistemologies. Gassendi's reply, which Descartes very testily answered (he even attempted to prevent the appearance of the French translation), unleashed the famous polemical debate between the two authors.

Hobbes, like Gassendi, maintained in opposition to Descartes the sensual origin of all ideas. For them, the imagination, as a faculty of representation, was an absolutely indispensable intermediate step between sensual perception and more abstract cognitive faculties and was in this capacity a necessary means of understanding. Descartes's differentiation between sensually determined cognitive forms and a "pure" thought that was completely free of any sensual experience was thus rendered void in their view.

Gassendi's conception of mechanical physical processes, above all of the effect of sensual impressions on the brain, essentially agrees with that of Descartes. But he saw the main cognitive principle in the brain itself and not in a non-corporeal substance that is joined to the human body. As a thinker who considered himself to be continuing the tradition of Epicurus' and Lucretius' interpretations of nature, Gassendi viewed human beings as physical creatures who as such also possessed intellectual capabilities.<sup>34</sup> All ideas stem from sense experiences and their further processing. Gassendi opposed his programmatic thesis of the physical determination of the essence of humanity, *primum adest tibi corpus*, to the Cartesian "cogito ergo sum" and to the postulate of a non-physical consciousness. Gassendi's definition of humanity as physical and sensual beings thus drew humans, in direct opposition to Descartes's view, into the same material universe that encompasses all other living creatures. The categorical integration of humanity into the sphere of all living creatures was thus directed against Descartes's definition of the essence of humanity in the same way as his recognition of intellectual abilities in animals criticized the Cartesian automaton theory—*brutes rationem restituo*.<sup>35</sup>

It was precisely in the formal responses to Descartes's *Méditations* that the philosophical disputes regarding the relationship between the intellectual and physical aspects of human nature in Descartes's, Hobbes's, and Gassendi's definitions also manifested themselves as differing views of language.<sup>36</sup>

Gassendi criticized at particular length Descartes's second meditation, in which Descartes had argued for the non-corporeal nature of the *res cogitans* and proposed that one can more reliably perceive the human mind than the body. Gassendi's argument against this premise of the Cartesian "cogito ergo sum" emphasizes the physical foundations of thought and contradicts Descartes's demarcation between human and animal by making reference to the particular cognitive and communicative faculties of animals. If the body of animals, like that of human beings, exhibits nerves and a brain, then it

also possesses a cognitive capacity, for the principle of thought lies in the brain (“sunt in brutis nervi, sunt spiritus, est cerebrum, est in cerebrum principium cognoscens”).<sup>37</sup>

In response to Descartes’s assertion that the brain in animals is furnished only with the capacity of “imagination” as a mechanical renewal of sensual impressions but not with thought like that of the non-corporeal soul of man, Gassendi claimed that the “imagination” of animals and human cognitive faculties do not differ substantially, but only gradually (“secundum magis et minus”) from one another. He thought that Descartes had simplified matters too much when he considered the absence of human language in animals (the main argument of the Cartesian automaton theory) to be equivalent to an absence of language in general. Animals *do* have their own communicative faculty, Gassendi thought, even though, like their thought, it does not reach the same level as in humans.<sup>38</sup>

At the same time as he rejected Descartes’s construction of a non-corporeal *res cogitans* and the absolutely unique status of humanity associated with that notion, Gassendi programmatically asserted the affiliation of humans with the animal kingdom, a fact that was not negated by human beings’ more highly developed intellectual and communicative abilities: “licet homo sit praestantissimum animalium, non eximitur tamen ex animalium numero.”<sup>39</sup>

With his inclusion of language in the argument against Descartes’s postulate of non-corporeal thought and of the absolutely unique status of humanity, Gassendi proceeded from a materialistic and sensualistic conception of language that was based upon the ideas of Epicurus and Lucretius. In addition to the presupposition of a communicative faculty in animals, among the primary tenets of this conception was the assumption of a natural, social origin of language and of the interdependence of language and thought, an assumption that was held in conscious opposition to the Platonic and Augustinian tradition that retained its influence in the rationalistic view of language.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, in the criticism he directed specifically at Descartes’s *Méditations*, Gassendi cited, apparently with the intention of making an argument based on language theory, the cognitive and communicative faculty of animals. But Descartes had rejected the existence of this faculty in the *Discours de la méthode*, and it had been the most important linguistic argument in his proof of the non-corporeal nature of thought and of the absolutely unique status of humanity.

One finds in Hobbes’s objections to Descartes a greater emphasis on aspects of linguistic theory than in those by Gassendi in so far as Hobbes, though only hypothetically, deduced the possibly physical nature of thought from the dependence of thought on language. Hobbes, just as much as Gassendi, objected to Descartes’s distinction between cognitive faculties that were both determined by and independent of sense experience, since they both believed that all thought ultimately had its origin in sense experience. As opposed to Descartes’s assumption of the non-corporeal nature of

thought, Hobbes advanced the hypothesis of the constitutive role of language in thought and of its connection to the “imagination.” His thesis that thinking only occurred with the help of words led to the conclusion that all thought was perhaps nothing other than a physical process that took place on the level of the “imagination.” With that, Hobbes drew the most extreme conclusion possible from the rejection of the rationalistic assumption that thought existed independently of language. From the dependence of thought on linguistic signs, which are themselves the object of the physically determined cognitive faculty called the “imagination,” one may deduce the possibly material nature of thought itself:

Now, what shall we say if it turns out that reasoning is simply the joining together and linking of names or labels by means of the verb “is”? It would follow that the inferences in our reasoning tell us nothing at all about the nature of things, but merely tell us about the labels applied to them; that is, all we can infer is whether or not we are combining the names of things in accordance with the arbitrary conventions which we have laid down in respect of their meaning. If this is so, as may well be the case, reasoning will depend on names, names will depend on the imagination, and imagination will depend (as I believe it does) merely on the motions of our bodily organs; and so the mind will be nothing more than motion occurring in various parts of an organic body.<sup>41</sup>

The problem of signification also stands in the center of Descartes’s response to these objections by Hobbes, even though this problem was interpreted in precisely the opposite sense in order to deduce the independence of thought from language. Descartes saw the proof of this independence in the nature of language itself, namely in the arbitrary character of the linguistic sign. How could one doubt that a Frenchman and a German would have the same ideas about the same things even though the words of their languages were completely different? Thus the objects of thought were not the phonetic forms, but rather the meanings of the words. After all, Hobbes himself had allowed that our ideas and their connection when we reason referred more to these meanings than to the words themselves (i.e. to their phonetic forms):

As for the linking together that occurs when we reason, this is not a linking of names but of the things that are signified by the names, and I am surprised that the opposite view should occur to anyone. Who doubts that a Frenchman and a German can reason about the same things, despite the fact that the words that they think of are completely different? And surely the philosopher refutes his own position when he talks of the arbitrary conventions that we have laid down concerning the meaning of words. For if he admits that the words signify something, why will he not allow that our reasoning deals with this something which is signified,

rather than merely with the words? And surely on his account, when he concludes that the mind is a motion he might just as well conclude that the earth is the sky, or anything else he likes.<sup>42</sup>

Descartes and Hobbes are talking at cross purposes here, as is the case in other sections of the objections and Descartes's response to them. The original Latin text illustrates this much more clearly than does the French translation. The positions taken on both sides were too much at odds with one another to allow a common language to be found. Descartes thus supposed that Hobbes was of the opinion that thought took place in the phonetic forms of words themselves, while Hobbes distinguished between the meanings expressed by phonetic forms and the things to which they referred. Descartes, on the other hand, was concerned with demarcating the boundary between the material, physical word and its meaning ("hoc aliquid quod significatur") as the distinction between sign and idea—a demarcation which in the following debate concerning language from the rationalistic point of view was conceived of as being a parallel to the distinction between body and soul. Since the independent status of thought was incontestable for Descartes, he declared the connection of thought with language, and the conclusions which were drawn from it, as being simply absurd.

As one of the authors of the responses to Descartes's *Meditations*, Antoine Arnauld also commented on the main theses of Cartesianism two decades before the appearance of the Port-Royal *Grammar* and *Logic*. Arnauld underscored the conformity of Descartes's definition of the essence of thought and of the relationship between body and soul with the doctrine of Augustine that was to acquire a central position in Jansenism. Despite the repeated emphasis on his principal agreement with Descartes, Arnauld still saw gaps in the explanation of the body and soul problem and in the demarcation of human thought from the mechanical behavior of animals. He thus desired a more convincing refutation of the tenets of sensualism, which Arnauld had already counted among the arsenal of arguments used by the enemies of religion—especially the denial of the existence of the soul by means of the thesis concerning the physical nature of thought.<sup>43</sup>

Thus two decades later the first chapter of the Port-Royal *Logic* ("Des idées selon leur nature et leur origine") was devoted to a refutation of sensualist epistemology. And in direct connection with the sensualistic premise, "nihil est in intellectu quod non prius fuerit in sensu," Hobbes's linguistically founded objection to Descartes is quoted in order to be emphatically rejected. In so doing, the *Logic* applied the same argument, and even to a great extent the same formulations, as Descartes had used in his reply to Hobbes, namely citing the arbitrary character of the linguistic sign as proof of the complete dissimilarity between the physical sign and the immaterial idea. With its apologetic interpretation of this problem, the *Logic* went significantly further than Descartes in that it characterized Hobbes's objection as a "very dangerous opinion" ("opinion très

dangereuse”), one that, if it were truly meant seriously, would amount to the acknowledgement of matter capable of thought and to a rejection of the immortality of the soul.<sup>44</sup>

This emphatic repudiation of sensualism was all the more necessary seeing as, ever since the controversy surrounding Descartes’s *Méditations*, those who had raised the sensualistic objections against dualism had gained ground by incorporating aspects of linguistic theory into their arguments. Here one must mention above all the various writings by Cureau de la Chambre,<sup>45</sup> which dealt with the character of the “passions” and their signifying function in both humans and beasts. De la Chambre’s works also dealt with the question concerning the intellectual and communicative abilities of animals, topics about which Descartes had repeatedly expressed his opinion even after the *Discours de la méthode*.<sup>46</sup> Cureau de la Chambre’s philosophical arguments, directed as they were against Descartes’s automaton theory, had far greater import than the spontaneous outcries of dismayed animal advocates.

The systematic nature of his philosophical writings makes clear the consequences resulting from the challenge presented by Descartes’s dualistic intensification of the body and soul problem. Just as “imagination” and “passion,” as physical cognitive faculties, were seen to be common to both animals and humans, so too did Cureau de la Chambre grant a communicative capacity to animals that corresponded to their intellectual abilities.

And Cureau de la Chambre even asked the insidious question of whether the expression, “mouvement de l’âme,” which Descartes had used to designate the affective movements in humans, had been merely a metaphor, or whether a movement of the soul literally occurred, which would mean that the soul had spatial extension and thus possessed a physical nature. Cureau de la Chambre bluntly opted for the second answer.<sup>47</sup> He thus raised the dualistic formulation of the body and soul problem in order to answer it with a suspension of dualism itself, and in a way that also rejected those aspects of linguistic theory which Descartes had advanced as supporting evidence for it. Cureau de la Chambre had therefore drawn from the dualistic statement of the problem the same materialistic conclusion which the young Arnauld had recognized as not yet having been adequately refuted in Descartes’s works.

In view of the objections that were levelled against Descartes, one must take into account that Gassendi’s sensualism, to which Cureau de la Chambre had also devoted himself, exhibited spiritualistic traits, and that at that time sensualistic views did not have to entail a conflict with the official orthodoxy, since even the Peripatetic philosophy then reigning at the universities had retained sensualistic doctrines from the scholastic tradition.

It was common to both Descartes and Gassendi that they favored a new conception of science in opposition to scholasticism. Gassendi’s clerical duties did not prevent him from being just as avid a champion of the natural

sciences as Descartes. The same applies to Descartes's informant of many years, Mersenne, who had accomplished significant things as a physicist and as an organizer of an extensive international correspondence with other scholars. And the shock over Galileo's condemnation was common not only to Descartes and Gassendi, but to many of the leading intellectual figures of the time.

But the antagonism between the basic rationalistic position of the one and the sensualistic position of the other could not be so easily resolved. Whereas Gassendi combined a new ideal of the natural sciences with the conception of humanity as a primarily physical and sensual being by linking this ideal to the assumption that all human knowledge stems from sense experience, Descartes's conception of humanity originated in the a priori notion of an intellectual substance that was opposed to a material one.

Arnauld's far-sightedness is revealed in his embitterment about the persecution to which Cartesian philosophy was subjected while sensualistic positions went unchallenged.<sup>48</sup>

We will see that Cartesian dualism and its doctrine of innate ideas were subsequently maintained as incontrovertible articles of faith in the eighteenth century so that they could be opposed to the advances of sensualism.<sup>49</sup>

Before this occurred, however, a development took place within the discussion of language in which the varying directions of the debates proceeding from Cartesianism and its interpretation of the relationship between body and soul become visible. In the following chapters, I will show a few stages of this development.

## 2 Language and the affects in the Port-Royal *Logic*

Earlier commentators of the Port-Royal *Grammar* (*Grammaire générale et raisonnée, contenant...Les raisons de ce qui est commun à toutes les langues, et les principales différences qui s'y rencontrent*, 1660)<sup>1</sup> had somewhat prematurely viewed it merely as a transposition of Descartes's philosophy into linguistic theory. Newer research has pointed out that to a considerable degree the *Grammar* in fact continued earlier traditions and combined them with aspects borrowed from Cartesianism.<sup>2</sup> Antoine Arnauld and Claude Lancelot are usually cited as the authors of the *Grammar*. Credit for the largest share of authorship must surely be given, however, to Lancelot. He had already composed a series of primer-like grammars before his conversations with Arnauld caused him to consider questions pertaining to linguistic philosophy. He incorporated these matters into the *Grammaire générale et raisonnée*, which became associated thereafter with the name Port-Royal.<sup>3</sup>

In the *Logique ou l'art de penser* (1662), however, which Arnauld and Pierre Nicole wrote together, Arnauld's stance as one of the most contentious philosophers of the century found its full expression. Despite its reference to the Port-Royal *Grammar*, the *Logic*, two years later, advocates a linguistic theory that links it directly and polemically with problems and points of controversy that stood at the center of philosophical interest at the time. As opposed to the *Grammar*, the *Logic* also explicitly demonstrates a specifically Jansenist development of Cartesianism and, in so doing, accords a central role to language.

Lancelot's *Grammar* proposes Cartesian principles less in its argument than in its program. This includes the classification of language within both the material and intellectual realm. As Descartes had already said, sounds, or the material components of language, are common to both men and parrots. If, on the other hand, human beings can form from only twenty-five or thirty sounds an infinite number of words with which they can communicate what occurs in the mind, then one has here one of the most convincing proofs of the intellectual essence of humanity. This is all the more so in that the material form of sounds and words has nothing in common with the intellectual content which they express. From the priority of the intellectual,

for the communication of which words were invented, follows the premise that an understanding of linguistic operations is only possible by considering the intellectual operations that are reproduced with the aid of language. These are the two primary intellectual operations of “conceiving” (“concevoir”) and “judging” (“juger”). On the basis of these fundamental operations, the authors argued, one can establish grammatical classifications of words and explain the sentence as the linguistic formulation of logical judgments. As the operation immediately following upon the first two, “raisonner” is thus relegated to the realm of logic.

The program of the Port-Royal *Grammar* is therefore Cartesian in that it is based on the assumption of two discrete substances, namely the physical and the intellectual, as well as on the premise of the a priori character of the intellectual, from which the laws of logical thought can be deduced as the self-evident foundations of language. One can observe a particular reference to the problems which Descartes raised and which were then widely discussed in that the *Grammar* makes reference to the analysis of thought both in terms of purely intellectual ideas and as ideas linked with physically derived representations. The same also applies to the remark that language thus also expresses the movements of the soul, or the affects, with which the interrogative and imperative grammatical forms were also aligned.

For all too long now scholars have thought that an agreement between the program and the execution of the Port-Royal *Grammar* was self-evident; more recently, however, the discrepancy between the two has been justifiably pointed out. Contrary to the older view, the *Grammar* does not always proceed from a consideration of the cognitive faculties when it treats the individual grammatical categories, and in several cases the practice of analysis allows for the appearance of an autonomy of grammatical rules, as opposed to logical ones.<sup>4</sup>

In a yet more direct and vigorous fashion than the *Grammar*, then, the Port-Royal *Logic* uses arguments based on linguistic theory to engage in contemporary philosophical debates, and in particular it addresses the objections levelled against Descartes’s *Méditations métaphysiques*. It supports throughout Descartes’s rationalistic argumentation with Jansenist views while making an appeal to Augustine. At the same time that it borrows elements from linguistic theory to argue for the postulates of rationalism, however, aspects of an interpretation of language already appear that indicate discrepancies in Descartes’s suggestions.

The *Logic* programmatically begins with a thesis concerning rationalistic epistemology, namely that

in metaphysics there is nothing more important than the origin of our ideas, the distinction between intellectual ideas and physical representations, the distinction between body and soul and the proofs for the immortality of the soul that are based on this distinction.<sup>5</sup>

The external structure of the *Logic* corresponds to the succession of

intellectual operations that had already been listed in the *Grammar*: Parts 1–3 are devoted, respectively, to the cognitive faculties of “concevoir,” “jugement,” and “raisonnement.” The fourth and last part carries the title “De la méthode.”

The first chapter begins immediately by treating the nature and origin of ideas. The authors placed Descartes’s distinction between pure ideas and the cognitive faculty of the “imagination” within a Jansenist perspective by making an explicit reference to Augustine and the doctrine of original sin. Since the Fall from Grace, humans have become accustomed to considering primarily physical things, the mental images of which necessarily reach the brain through the senses. Thus most people believe that all things are capable of being thought only in physical form, as if there existed merely this manner of thinking.<sup>6</sup> To illustrate the physically conditioned cognitive faculty of the “imagination,” as opposed to pure thought, the authors cite Descartes’s classical example of the polygon that is only graspable intellectually and abstractly, but cannot be sensibly imagined or perceived.

Characteristically, the distinction between pure thought and the sensuous faculties of representation leads directly to a rejection of the linguistically founded objections to the rationalistic premise. In an even more emphatic and explicit fashion than Descartes had done, the *Logic* stresses that the ideas that are expressed with the aid of language have to be present in thought before they can be assigned to linguistic signs as meaning. Without this prior existence of ideas, words would be nothing more than a mere series of meaningless sounds.

The authors of the *Logic* thought that this determination was necessary in order to refute two “very dangerous opinions” held by contemporary philosophers. The first of these opinions denied that human beings could possess the idea of God independent of his designation. This would presuppose that knowledge of God would also stem from experience. To counter this notion, the *Logic* referred (although without specifically naming the authors in question) to the responses Hobbes and Gassendi had made to Descartes’s *Meditations* (see my comments in the previous chapter on Descartes’s polemical confrontation with Hobbes and Gassendi).

Even more decisive is the position the *Logic* takes in relation to the second of these “dangerous opinions”: namely, that if it had been meant seriously, Hobbes’s response would disavow the doctrine of the immortality of the soul.

At issue was Hobbes’s objection to Descartes in which the former maintained that reasoning was perhaps nothing more than a succession of words that are connected to one another with the aid of the copula. The hypothetical consequence which Hobbes drew from this notion is also copiously quoted, namely that the soul was nothing other than the movement of certain parts of the organic body, since words depended upon the physically determined cognitive faculty of the imagination.<sup>7</sup>

It could hardly have been expressed more clearly how necessary the assumption of a priori ideas, that is ideas that were independent of linguistic signs, was for the rationalistic postulate and its religious interpretation. From the standpoint of the Port-Royal *Logic*, language could thus only be considered an instrument created by common consent among human beings in order to designate independently pre-existent ideas. Without the prior existence of ideas, such an agreement about the use of linguistic signs would have been just as impossible as making a blind man understand what the words “red,” “green” or “blue” mean. Since he does not possess the attendant ideas, he would also be unable to connect them with any phonetic series. The authors of the *Logic* were of course not aware that it was with precisely this example that other thinkers would refer to senses as the origin of ideas. They certainly could not have imagined that in the eighteenth century the sense perception of the blind and of deaf-mutes, and the question of how they formed ideas that could be communicated, became a favorite test-case for sensualistic epistemology, and in this way motivated the title for Diderot’s “letters” on the blind and deaf-mutes.

A further argument made in the *Logic* for the priority of ideas concerned the universality of thought as opposed to the specificity of individual languages. Even in geometry different nations use varying terms; in other words, a different system of notation is used even in that realm which raises the least doubt that we are dealing with identical statements about identical truths even though they are being expressed by different languages. How else, some asked, could Arabs and Frenchmen, who have otherwise given the same sounds entirely different meanings, agree in their judgments and conclusions if their thought depended upon language? If the linguistic sign is rightly understood to be arbitrary, then one must very carefully guard against viewing the meanings also as arbitrary. Rather, the meanings of words are ideas shared by all human beings, and only the manner of the linguistic signification is arbitrary, in so far as this is left to the respective linguistic community to formulate.

As a final example for the characterization of the essence of ideas, the *Logic* makes reference to their origin, and thereby takes a position with respect to sensualism. Arnauld and Nicole left nothing to be desired in the way of clarity: “The entire question consists in knowing whether ideas stem from the senses, and whether the following maxim is true: nihil est in intellectu quod non prius fuerit in sensu.”<sup>8</sup> It is with all the more regret that they must label Gassendi’s position as being in conflict with religion, since he possesses the standing of a respected philosopher and, in addition, his opinion is shared by other philosophers. Arnauld and Nicole argued that the sensualistic thesis stood in contrast to true philosophy, for, as they wrote, “we perceive nothing so distinctly as our own thoughts, and there is no more clear proposition than this: I think, therefore I am.” This is a conclusion that can boast of absolute evidence, because the words “to be” and “to think” designate such clear concepts that any attempt to explain them could only make them more obscure.<sup>9</sup>

This Cartesian line of argumentation is then strengthened by an exhaustive citation of the objections that Augustine had raised against the sensuous origin of ideas. He had claimed that the material sounds of language indicate absolutely no inner connection with the ideas they express, and that the mental representation that is associated with them is nothing other than a representation of sounds. It is only through habit (“accoutumance”) that the soul has reached the point that it can simultaneously entertain the representation of an idea and the representation of a series of sounds and combine them with one another.

Of no less interest than these linguistic arguments in favor of dualism in the Port-Royal *Logic* are the comments on the affective components of language. In a study that appeared under the title “Précurseurs français de la grammaire ‘affective’”<sup>10</sup> the view was taken that the role of the affects in language was first addressed in detail in the Port-Royal *Logic*, even if it is true that since Aristotle, rhetoric had sought to locate in style the expression of the soul’s movements. Yet this argument neglects two important circumstances. The first is that Descartes’s portrayal of the delimitation and of the interplay of “imagination,” “passion” and “raison” in no way obscured the role of the affects in language, but rather was able to bring that very fact into view. The other was that no less a person than Pascal had already, albeit from a Jansenist perspective, juxtaposed the affects and “raison” in a fashion similar to the way in which the Port-Royal *Logic* was soon to do.

The texts by Pascal that come into question here are his *Pensées* and his *Art de persuader*. For Pascal, the “esprit de géométrie,” or the expression of abstract and deductive thinking, can, with its rigid principles, never be adequate to the manifold phenomena of life. The resultant rejection of refined forms of rationalistically inspired thought is unmistakable. And in the opposition of “esprit” and “coeur” as well, the validity of abstract and deductive thinking is severely delimited. The “esprit” operates with logical evidence, as is characteristic for “raison.” The “coeur” corresponds to thinking determined by the affects, which also answers to Descartes’s description of the “passions.” Pascal’s Jansenist point of view is directly expressed in his references to Augustine. Pascal referred to the ideas of Augustine which were then later quoted in the Port-Royal *Logic*, namely that the actions and thought of human beings are so thoroughly determined by the affects in this their earthly existence that they much more readily believe what is pleasing to them than what has been proven to them. He argued that logical reasoning or argumentation is actually the more natural manner of thinking, but as a result of original sin, the truth that is transmitted with the aid of the “coeur” is much more accessible than the “vérité démontrée” that is tied to the “esprit.” Although this path of persuasion is actually debasing and undignified, one cannot do without it in our earthly existence.<sup>11</sup> For this reason he has to define human communication interactively. The art of persuasion thus demands the psychological adjustment to those who are to be persuaded. One has to know and appeal to their personal inclinations, their “esprit” and “coeur.” “The art of

persuasion therefore consists just as much in the art of pleasing as in that of demonstrating: to such a great extent do people behave more according to their moods than according to reason."<sup>12</sup> Precisely because human beings proceed more often from their affects than from reason, the art of pleasing is more useful for co-operation and communication, yet it is also much more complicated than logical argumentation. For, as opposed to the universally valid premises of thought, the motives and inducements of pleasure differ from person to person and even change all too rapidly in one and the same person. Outside of geometry there are almost no truths which we could all agree upon. Thus there can hardly be rules for the assimilation of language to the constantly changing affects.<sup>13</sup>

There are also numerous other remarks expressed in a similar tone about eloquence strewn throughout Pascal's *Pensées*.<sup>14</sup> Style, Pascal writes, has to address the human affects, those mainsprings of the heart, by which he meant Descartes's "passions":

Eloquence is the art of saying things so that: 1. those to whom one speaks understand them without difficulty and with pleasure; 2. they feel enough interest so that their own self-love will bring them to focusing their thoughts on them. Eloquence thus consists in a correspondence which we try to achieve between the mind and the heart ("l'esprit et le coeur") of those to whom we are speaking and of the thoughts and expressions which we use; we therefore have to have thoroughly studied the human heart in order to know all of its mainsprings so that we can properly adjust our language to them. We have to place ourselves in the position of those who are supposed to understand us, and we should put the formulations we use to the test of our own heart in order to see whether they have been aptly chosen and whether we can be sure that the listener will be won by them.<sup>15</sup>

The delimitation of "raison" that occurred as a result of Pascal's desire to equate linguistic expression with those "mainsprings of the heart" no doubt had a specifically Jansenist background. The assumption of human dependence upon predestination was of necessity opposed to any super-elevation of "raison." Pascal's remarks about the limits of "raison" are numerous and often more clear than his untranslatable phrase: "Le coeur a ses raisons que la raison ne connaît point."<sup>16</sup>

Yet if it had also been Pascal's concern not to allow the all too simple interpretation of Descartes that attempted to eliminate the struggle between "raison" and "passions" simply by granting "raison" an unlimited power,<sup>17</sup> then Pascal also wanted anything but a heightening of the importance of the "passions." His aim was to employ their undeniable power to show that truth can be made more readily accessible through a style that appeals to the affects.

Pascal's following comments about the relationship between words and their meaning thus seem at first glance almost unintelligible:

The same meaning changes according to the words that express it. Meaning receives its dignity from words rather than bestowing it upon them; one must look for examples of this (Un même sens change selon les paroles qui l'expriment. Les sens reçoivent des paroles leur dignité, au lieu de la leur donner. Il en faut chercher des exemples).<sup>18</sup>

The extensive treatment of this problem in the Port-Royal *Logic* shows that it is the affective meaning of particular words which is meant here. The concept ("un même sens") and the meaning of the respective words used to designate it are distinguished from one another, since the different synonymous significations of the same concept possess a valuation that varies according to their affective emphasis. This is also what is meant by the "dignity" which, according to Pascal, meaning receives through its signification.

The Port-Royal *Logic* was published in 1662, the year of Pascal's death, and after its authors had enjoyed an exchange of ideas with him following his move to Port-Royal in 1654. Pascal's comments on the affective uses of language were further developed in the *Logic* itself. The discussion of figures of speech as an expression of the "passions" was not a new topic, but because of Pascal it was legitimated from a Jansenist point of view. Yet the *Logic* does treat the problem of the affective meanings of words much more thoroughly than Pascal had done, for he had only cursorily touched on the issue.

One important subject of the *Logic* is the difficulty of comprehending and communicating the truth due to the varying nature of linguistic signs on the one hand and that of thoughts on the other. The arguments concerning this problem even suggest a certain questioning of the assumption that thinking occurs completely independently of language. One immediate danger for thinking results from the necessity of employing external, physical signs in linguistic communication. This can lead us to the point where "our ideas are so closely bound to words that we often reflect on words more than on things. This is one of the most common causes for the confusion of our ideas and of our language."<sup>19</sup>

The danger of thinking being misguided through its orientation toward words is all the greater in that the meanings of words often lack clarity. Concepts that are so often used to characterize pure intellect, such as "idea," "being," "extension" etc. are so evident that they do not even require a definition, nor is there likely to be any doubt about the meaning of the terms in question. However, human beings often entertain different notions about the same things, which they nevertheless designate with the same name. Thus the idea of virtue means something entirely different for a heathen philosopher than it does for a Christian, and still they use the same word. Even one and the same individual can in the course of his or her life come to various convictions about the same things and nevertheless retain the same designation for them. A typical example of the "confusion of words"

(“confusion des mots”) is the different and even opposite meanings that are associated with the word “soul” (“âme”)—a problem to which Descartes had already referred.<sup>20</sup>

In addition, the meaning of words can also have affective components that are rarely considered in their traditional definitions. In this connection, the *Logic* distinguishes between actual meaning and the accessory or “auxiliary ideas” (“idées accessoires”) called forth by a word. At issue are the components of meaning in which the emotional state of the speaker is expressed as a valuation.

If, for example, one says to someone that he lied, then what is being stated is not only the fact that that person has knowingly asserted an untruth. Beyond this, one is also issuing a reproach, in fact usually with a very conscious intention to subject that person to contempt or scorn. For merely the use of the word “lie” shows that the speaker does not consider that the person being addressed deserves any respect.

Further examples prove that one can choose for one and the same subject either an insulting or a flattering designation, a decent or an offensive one. The designation for an inherently reprehensible circumstance could express one’s disgust for its perniciousness, whereas frivolous designations would place the same circumstance in an impudent light. These arguments very clearly point out what Pascal meant by the phrase quoted above: “The same meaning changes according to the words that express it...one must look for examples of this.” The Port-Royal *Logic* delivered the required examples in which the influence of affective meanings is illustrated.

Arnauld and Nicole even enter into the question of the accessory ideas that are aroused by intonation, gestures, and facial expressions and indicate an inner movement or a personal judgment on the part of the speaker. What is at issue here are the affective components that are not lexically fixed and are only made manifest by the speaker by means of additional modes of expression.

Occasionally these accessory ideas are combined with the respective words not through properly linguistic usage, but rather are added later by the person availing himself of these words. These accessory ideas are, in the proper sense of the word, those which are expressed by intonation, by facial expressions, by gestures, or by other natural signs; they combine our words with an infinitely large number of ideas through which meaning is refined, changed, restricted or enlarged in that the emotions, judgments and opinions of the speaker are added to the expression.<sup>21</sup>

Intonation is different according to the circumstances in which it is used, for example, whether one is teaching, flattering, or reproaching someone else, and one adds an essential meaning to the words in so doing. And the intensity of tone is often not just determined by the wish of the speaker to be heard distinctly. In certain cases, for example in making reprimands, an

increased level of tonal intensity can be absolutely necessary in achieving the communication of the desired idea by means of the requisite impression: “le ton...est nécessaire pour former dans l’esprit l’idée qu’on veut y imprimer.”<sup>22</sup>

The “figures de construction,” or the conscious deviations from normal word order that are discussed in the same chapter of the *Logic*, have a similar task in that they express the emotions of the speaker in addition to the actual content of the statement being made. In connection with such “figures,” the Port-Royal *Grammar* had still spoken of a violation of *natural* word order and thus of the obscurity that thereby results. But, by the time the *Logic* appeared, a recognition of the affects as a necessary component of language justified the “figures de construction” as well as a natural form of expression. Pascal’s idea that human beings receive truth more easily when they are inwardly moved is thus made even more comprehensive by legitimating stylistic possibilities that place people in a receptive state for the intended communication by appealing to their affects.

Style must certainly still be adequate to the respective subject at hand. The dry scholastic style is by all means the correct one for purely speculative matters, since they give no cause for emotional excitation. However, in the case of subjects that touch on the emotions, it would be incorrect to adopt a style that is dry, cold, and devoid of movement. This is also no less applicable to the communication of the Christian verities. By making reference to the stirring language of the Church Fathers the *Logic* again links itself with Pascal and his characterization of the language of Augustine and the Prophets.<sup>23</sup>

If the Port-Royal *Logic* sympathetically developed Pascal’s pertinent ideas concerning the role of the affects in language, then it is also true that in one important respect it put itself at an unmistakable distance from him: namely in the assessment of the “imagination.” As compared to Pascal, the *Logic* provides only a modest critique of this concept. The *Logic* certainly classifies the sensuous capacity of representation under pure thought, which is the sole source of self-evident knowledge. But there follows nothing even approximating such a condemnation of “imagination” as one finds in Pascal’s tirade against this “deceptive form of thought which was apparently only given to us to lead us astray.”<sup>24</sup>

Thus, compared to Pascal’s characterization of the sensuous capacity of representation, the *Logic* employs formulations that refer to physical processes, such as “impressing an image upon our mind” (“imprimer une image à notre esprit”) in a positive sense even when they are used to describe linguistic communication. The *Logic* thus demonstrates early traces of the stance that, during his later controversies with Malebranche and his followers, led Arnauld to declare his allegiance to the notion of the positive role that the sensuous capacity of representation plays in the production of language.

### 3 Cordemoy and dualism: consequences of a Cartesian theory of signs

Cordemoy's *Discours physique de la parole* of 1668 provides a comprehensive analysis of language<sup>1</sup> from the very consciously chosen vantage point of Cartesian philosophy. In a manner practically unparalleled by any other text, it thus illustrates the occasionally contradictory possibilities that could result from employing various components of Cartesianism in the interpretation of language. The tension that exists between Descartes's metaphysical epistemology on the one hand, and his physiology and psychophysiology on the other, is reflected in Cordemoy's book by the manner in which he attempted to unite the rudiments of a philosophy of language derived from Cartesianism.

One must see the *Discours physique de la parole* in conjunction with two other texts which Cordemoy wrote at the same time, for these works make clear his efforts to prevent Descartes's philosophy—which had, after all, not been spared from attack on religious grounds—from falling under the suspicion of unorthodoxy. I am referring to a work that Cordemoy had published two years before, in 1666, *The Distinction between Body and Soul, in Six Treatises for the Purpose of Explaining Physics (Le discernement du corps et de l'âme, en six discours, pour servir d'éclaircissement de la physique)*, as well as a text that appeared in the same year as the *Discours*: "In order to show that the Philosophy of Mr. Descartes and his Opinions concerning Animals are not dangerous in and of themselves, and that everything which he has written on this Subject is in Agreement with the first Chapter of Genesis."<sup>2</sup>

Both titles illustrate the intention of the author to stave off any accusation of a contradiction with dogma in Descartes's physics, its application to the study of human beings and of other living creatures. The task of the *Discours physique de la parole* was therefore to support the anthropological cast of Cartesian dualism by using proofs to shore up the distinction between body and soul that were based on an analysis of language.

Cordemoy's point of departure was Descartes's thesis that the bodies of all living creatures were machines that function according to the laws of mechanics. Since animals lack the capacity to think and feel, they are, as opposed to human beings, mere automatons, and their vocal utterances and

reactions to sounds only mechanical reflexes. Thus animals, as Descartes had already postulated, resemble artificial machines which humans could build, even including mechanisms that produce the phonetic series of human language.

Yet the sounds of human language are obviously also brought forth by the body. Thus, one must ask, what share do the body and the soul have in the production of language? It was just this question, which was supposed to help define the soul, that led Cordemoy to examine in detail the physiological foundations of language and generally motivated the title of his treatise. The formation of sounds, which is obviously purely a concern of the machine, takes up a great deal of space in Cordemoy's discussion and served as the source for the phonetics lesson in Molière's *Bourgeois gentilhomme*.<sup>3</sup> In the following I will only deal with those arguments in which Cordemoy investigated the relationship between body and soul within language. I will be concerned above all with the passages in Cordemoy that suggest the areas in which Descartes's psychophysiology might have been used to explain the co-operation of the human body and soul.

The mere fact that humans speak is no proof of the existence of the soul. For animals also emit sounds, and the sounds which animals produce, like their reactions to the sounds they perceive, can be only purely mechanical reflexes of the machine. Cordemoy even claimed to prove the mere automatism of conditioned reflexes by an experiment: If a linnet raised in captivity always hears a particular sound while feeding that is different from the one that normally occurs in nature, then when it sees its food, it will finally automatically emit this other sound even though it can have absolutely no purpose or meaning in the cage.<sup>4</sup> The machines of all living creatures are so perfectly organized by Creation that they stay alive solely by means of automatic reflexive motions, among which number, under the natural circumstances of their life, both the expression of sounds and reactions to them.

One proof of the activity of the soul could be provided, however, by the fact that the human body produces signs that stand in no relation to its immediate circumstances or self-preservation, but serve instead to communicate ideas. This not only applies to human phonetic languages, but partially to our facial expressions and gestures as well. Facial expressions and gestures belong solely to that realm of human communicative activity in which signs of ideas are produced. And what is more, they constitute the most universal language, since all human beings understand them beyond the boundaries of individual languages. Of course, facial expressions and gestures are often triggered by physical circumstances and in this respect could certainly occur even if the body had not been given a soul. For this reason, Cordemoy did not accept facial expressions and gestures as a valid proof of the existence of the soul.<sup>5</sup>

However, human phonetic language does furnish this proof when it expresses ideas that are in no way occasioned by physical circumstances.

The relation between sign and idea thereby corresponds to the one between body and soul. Since signs and ideas are of a completely different nature, and yet closely linked with one another, their connection can only be the work of a non-corporeal substance. For although an unmistakable association exists between the signs and the ideas they express, there is no obvious connection explicable by mechanical laws between the qualities of signs and their respective ideas. The arbitrary character of the linguistic sign was thus viewed as the expression of the fundamental dissimilarity of body and soul.

What correspondence is supposed to exist, or through which physical processes is the relationship produced, between the idea of negation and either shaking the head or, more generally, the movement of certain organs of articulation activated to bring forth sounds? Cordemoy took it as given that only the soul can combine ideas and signs with one another. His answer was that the soul therefore institutes conventional physical signs for the communication of its ideas. The conventional connection between the ideas of the soul and physical signs is thus a partial aspect of the union of body and soul brought about by God.<sup>6</sup>

Yet the respective functions of the body and soul remain nevertheless distinct within language. Everything that serves the production of the sounds of a word belongs to the body. The meaning of the word, on the other hand, is a perception of the soul. An understanding that would take place without the aid of any physical means, that is without signs, would thus correspond to the actual nature of thought.<sup>7</sup> But as a result of the union of body and soul, physical signs are necessary for the communication of non-corporeal ideas. If then two souls wish to communicate with one another, they have to use the body and express their ideas through movements of the body, which means above all through speaking.

It is only as a result of this fact that difficulties of understanding occur, for we would always be able to understand ideas effortlessly if their communication were not tied to language. It is not ideas in and of themselves that present difficulties, but rather only the necessity of perceiving the non-corporeal thought within the completely different physical sign. If, in the earthly existence of human beings, there were no such thing as the union of the soul with the body, then all human beings' souls would be in a position to convey their ideas immediately and with perfect clarity.<sup>8</sup>

Of especial interest in the present connection is Cordemoy's attempt to substantiate his theory of the coordination of sound and thought on the basis of physiology. He wrote that the impression in the brain, which Descartes had also seen as a point of mediation between body and soul, is the object that is immediately perceived by the soul during the act of linguistic communication. Cordemoy further developed Descartes's remarks about the habit of the soul in linking sound and meaning together into a description of the processes in the brain: even while first learning language, the impression of a word in the brain is connected with the impression of the respective object, since both occur simultaneously and are thus associated with one

another. The physiology of speech is automated in a fashion similar to that of the physiology of understanding: when the soul represents to itself an object with the aid of an impression revived in the brain, the impression of the appropriate word is simultaneously aroused, and through this physical and mechanical process the organs of speech adjust themselves for the articulation of a word.<sup>9</sup>

Cordemoy's explanations of the physiological foundations of understanding and speaking therefore allow the theoretically emphasized role of a non-corporeal substance to recede quite noticeably into the background. From the time in which the word is learned onwards, the task accorded to the soul, namely to combine words with their meaning, is automated within the functioning of the machine<sup>10</sup>—a process that, from a Cartesian viewpoint, naturally presupposed the existence of a thinking soul.

And when he enters into Descartes's explanation of the "imagination," Cordemoy saw the relevance of the physiological factors for the phonetic, as well as for the semantic, level of language. In fact, the "imagination" proves to be the most important of the capacities of the soul ("facultés de l'âme") for the manipulation of language in so far as it is this faculty that calls forth the representation of absent objects by renewing the impressions that those objects first produced: speech requires the "imaginative" renewal of the impression of words we have already heard in order to articulate them at all.

The same applies to the impression of meaning connected to combinations of sound. A familiarity with words, which are not only physical signs but arbitrary ones at that, can only come from sensuous experience. Yet Cordemoy noticed the contradiction between the experiential basis of language acquisition and Descartes's postulate of innate ideas. He tried to solve this contradiction by subsequently viewing the relative perfection of language acquisition as a proof for the necessity of a pre-existent "raison."<sup>11</sup>

The appropriation of physiological arguments for an explanation of the different capacities in human understanding and speech thus led to an even more drastic reduction of the role of a non-corporeal substance in language. Cordemoy's explanation logically resulted from his view of the physiological processes connected with thinking and speaking. If one person quickly and correctly understands the thoughts being communicated, and another grasps the same thoughts much more slowly or not at all, then this difference cannot be because of the nature of the soul or of the "raison" that is in principle identical in all people; rather, it must be due instead to the different characteristics of the brain and other bodily organs. The differences in intellectual grasp are above all contingent upon the different construction of the brain ("construction du cerveau").<sup>12</sup> For the better a brain is constructed, the more distinct the impressions will be that are drawn upon it, and thus the clearer the ideas will be that correspond to these impressions. Those people will therefore have the greatest abilities of understanding and expressing ideas who possess the most important requirements for it: they have the best organized brain ("le cerveau le mieux disposé") and therefore the clearest

and liveliest impressions of all things, including words. Not only the appropriate choice of words, but also the logical arrangement of the thoughts to be expressed require clearly differentiated impressions and a corresponding quality of the brain.<sup>13</sup>

In a manner similar to his appropriation of the physiological explanation of the “imagination,” Cordemoy’s view of language also incorporated Descartes’s doctrine of the “passions,” or those cognitive faculties that are triggered by the body and consist in the movements of the soul. He also traced different human psychological reactions back to characteristics of the brain. It is, for example, necessary for an orator to employ appropriate linguistic means to produce impressions in the brain of the listener which move his soul and call forth the desired “passion.”

The Cartesian cast of Cordemoy’s arguments makes clear the complexity of an interpretation of language from a consciously dualistic point of view. In the debate about language that took place during the rest of the seventeenth and throughout the eighteenth centuries, the problems that were raised by this view continued to be associated with the arguments concerning the relationship between the physical and intellectual nature of humanity.

## 4 The Cartesian argument: rationalism and empiricism in Bernard Lamy's conception of language

The most comprehensive synopsis and fruitful development of the rudiments of a Cartesian interpretation of language appeared during the second half of the seventeenth century in the *Rhetoric* by the orator Bernard Lamy.<sup>1</sup> It was first published in 1675 under the title *De l'art de parler*, and until 1757 it was reprinted no less than nineteen times, although after 1688 it appeared under the title *La Rhétorique, ou l'Art de parler*. Lamy revised and considerably expanded each of the new editions that appeared until his death in 1701. In the breadth and penetration with which it addresses the questions it raises, Lamy's book differs considerably from the numerous works on rhetoric that remained beholden to a rigid tradition. Although Lamy proceeded from Descartes's metaphysics, the physiological foundations of thought and language receive much greater emphasis than does "raison;" as in the works of Cordemoy, the application of Descartes's psychophysiology makes itself felt here as well.

Just as the Port-Royal *Grammar* had done, Lamy's *Rhetoric* makes the claim for the universal validity of all languages. Even the preoccupation with the problem of the relationship between "raison" and "usage" is common to both. Lamy's discussion of the laws that "raison" prescribes for language quite naturally precedes his discussion of the laws of "coutûme." The division between the purely physical and purely intellectual aspects of words and the parallelism of this division with the conception of the relationship between body and soul clearly align his work with Port-Royal and Cordemoy.

Lamy's initial decision to frame the problem in rationalistic and metaphysical terms did not, however, determine the main emphasis of the *Rhetoric*. His treatment of the laws prescribed by "raison" essentially consists of a rather brief portrayal of the various classes of words, and it was obviously modelled on the Port-Royal *Grammar*. He gave more attention to the aspects of linguistic usage that do not derive from the non-corporeal nature of thought. According to Lamy, even the formulation of the content that language is supposed to communicate includes the emotions or affects. These belong as much to communication as the actual ideas themselves. This is the cause of the differences among individual modes of expression within

a single linguistic community. The “usage” comes about as a regulative principle which, though it is often opposed to the principles of “raison,” must be followed as a demand of “raison” itself, since otherwise understanding itself would be put into question. To be sure, scholars should nevertheless ensure that language is brought into ever closer alignment with “raison.”<sup>2</sup> Yet Lamy repeatedly emphasized the necessity of the sensuous capacity of representation for the functioning of language. He saw even the rendering of the emotions as such an indispensable element of linguistic communication that he devoted an entire chapter to it: “How one can express the movements of our soul.”<sup>3</sup> He maintained that a language that does not allow one to perceive the emotions of the speaker resembles the thoughts it is supposed to express just as little as a cadaver resembles a living body.

This necessary expression of the inner movement, or emotions, can occur primarily in two ways: by using designations that are connected with an affective accessory idea or by employing a particular arrangement of words. Thus even the articulation of the main and accessory meanings of a word is borrowed from Port-Royal, and indeed the same examples often serve to illustrate them.

The connection of such affective accessory ideas with a particular word originally resulted from their combination with mimicry, gestures and intonation whereby the respective affect or emotion of the speaker was expressed. Later on, the accessory idea then became so closely associated with the phonetic image that it alone came to be expressed by the word.<sup>4</sup> With this observation, Lamy went beyond the notion of the coexistence of word and gestures that is described in the Port-Royal *Logic* in that he granted that the meaning of gestures gradually becomes a meaning of the word itself.

Lamy devoted one of the main sections of his *Rhetoric*, which in the first edition had already comprised thirteen chapters, to a discussion of the expressive means of refined and nuanced intellectual contents. The first chapter describes the necessity for the existence of linguistic modes of expression for the many different aspects under which the same thing can be seen. Hence the absolute necessity of a flexible use of language that combines various elements in different ways, since no language can possibly have an adequate supply of individual signs for the multitude of differentiated intellectual contents. This distinguishing task is given to various figures of speech. Figures such as questions, repetition, ellipsis, suspension, and antithesis are the immediate expression of emotions.<sup>5</sup> And it is precisely for this reason that they provide the advantage of achieving an incomparably stronger impression on the listener than normal speech. By calling forth the “passions” of the listener and thereby arousing his or her attention, these figures of speech can allow truth, which is otherwise difficult to perceive, to appear more distinctly and even with greater clarity of expression.

For truth alone is not strong enough to force its recognition upon us because it often stands in opposition to human self-love and individual

interests. Human beings “close their senses off from uncomfortable truths in order to prevent them from entering into consciousness.” Once again the exchange of ideas in linguistic communication is expressly described as an act of sense perception. If the task of rhetoric is thus to set the “passions” of the listener into motion in order to allow truth access to the mind by using these “mainsprings of the soul,” then figures of speech are just as indispensable in this process as weapons are to soldiers. They are by no means a mere ornament of style, for only with their help can speakers shake the soul of their listeners and firmly impress truth upon them.

A figure (like analogy) has, in addition, the particular advantage that, by means of “choses sensibles,” it can make even the most abstract ideas apparent to the senses. Lamy discussed the merits of comparison with sensibly perceptible objects in greater detail when he treated the metaphorical or figural use of words, to which he had devoted several chapters of his *Rhetoric* in its earliest version. Du Marsais later dealt with the same subject in his famous work, *Des Tropes, ou des différents sens dans lesquels on peut prendre un même mot dans une même langue* (1730). Thus, more than a half century before Du Marsais, Lamy portrayed the metaphorical use of words as being necessary and completely natural. For it is precisely in this sense that he made his observation that one must see them as a necessary enrichment of language for the purpose of expressing a multitude of differentiated thoughts. And the figural use of words has the additional advantage of appealing to the senses and of thus easing comprehension, since people normally understand things that they can perceive sensually.<sup>6</sup> Like the Port-Royal *Logic*, Lamy also justified rhetoric by referring to its frequent use in the Holy Scripture.

After the preceding elaboration, it will come as no surprise that Lamy exhaustively dealt with the “imagination” and that, in so doing, as Cordemoy had done before him, he attempted to formulate a physiological explanation for the use of both words and style. Sense perceptions leave impressions in the brain with which the idea of the respective object is combined. The arousal of this idea results simultaneously with the revival of the impression in the substance of the brain, whereby the object in question first becomes capable of being represented to the mind.

Thus, for Lamy, too, the quality of the “imagination,” and of the linguistic capacity upon which it rests, depends on the condition of the brain. The better the substance of one’s brain, the more distinct the images are that are etched on it—and thus the more distinct one’s style will be. For the mode of a person’s speech is the copy of the represented “painting” of the things being talked about in the brain. If this painting is not clear and well organized, then the style must also be confused. The difference of individual styles is thus essentially determined by the different condition of our brains.<sup>7</sup>

The correct choice of individual words also depends upon the condition of the brain. When one is listening or reading, words cause the same traces in the brain as other perceived objects and are combined with the

impressions of the respective objects. This combination is an essential component of memory and can occur in most people more or less quickly and accurately. The quality of memory depends on how easily the impressions of words and the impressions of things are simultaneously renewed in the brain. If a complete correspondence does not occur here, then the speaker will not possess the correct word for a thought quickly enough, and he or she will use a less appropriate expression. This is the source of individual differences in the choice of words. The perfect linguistic expression thus rests on the best possible functioning of these physical bases of memory.<sup>8</sup>

If the quality of the brain differentiates each individual's style, then there are factors of yet another magnitude to which entire realms of society are subjected, but which also take effect only through the sensuous and physical existence of human beings: namely the dominant standard of taste of an epoch, as well as the climate. "Every climate, every century has its own style."<sup>9</sup>

After treating the further advantages of a good "imagination," Lamy finally comes to the conclusion that the delusions to which it can succumb have to be corrected by "esprit" and "raison" (the meaning of the two words can hardly be distinguished here). The "imagination" and "mémoire," and therefore the connection of idea and meaning, depend upon the organs of the body. The "esprit," as an intellectual principle, thus has the task of preventing their misuse by making a selection from the multiplicity of thoughts called forth by a lively "imagination." To be sure, Lamy emphasized that even this purely intellectual form of thought called "esprit" can be different from person to person, and appears, next to the "imagination," "mémoire," the taste of an epoch, and the climate, as a further differentiating factor of style.<sup>10</sup>

How little Lamy wanted to diminish the importance of our sensuous faculty of perception by mentioning the corrective role of the "esprit" and of "raison" becomes evident when, in the next sections of his *Rhetoric*, he underscored the necessity of a mode of expression that appeals to the senses. Although Descartes had expressly differentiated between "imaginer" and "concevoir," and this problem had been one of the points of controversy with Gassendi, Lamy saw in a mode of expression that appeals to the senses the possibility of giving the listener a representation of a thing; Lamy designated this operation "concevoir." An abstract method of demonstration is appropriate for the language of mathematics. However, in other realms, which are approached from a multitude of complex phenomena and are therefore unlike mathematics, which has a small number of assured premises, such an abstract language is unsuitable. Human beings depend on their sensuous faculties of perception and representation even for the understanding of abstract things. The rejection of the abstract method of demonstration is apparent even in Lamy's mathematical works. To judge from the testimony of Rousseau, Lamy understood how to portray geometry and algebra more in the sense of a connection of thoughts (a concept that

would play a central role in the language debates of the eighteenth century) rather than through a chain of demonstrations.<sup>11</sup>

In his chapter entitled “The same things can be conceived of in different ways: Language, as a reflection of the mind, has to indicate this,” Lamy explicitly rejected an application of the language and ways of thinking found in mathematics to other areas of linguistic usage; that is, he refuted the transferability of the principles of those disciplines which, for rationalism, had represented science *par excellence*. Mathematical axioms lead to the same thoughts and to the same mode of expression, so that all geometricians equate the sum of the angles of a triangle with that of two right angles. In other areas, however, people’s judgment expresses their respective interests and views, their previous experience, and a multitude of psychological factors; their thoughts and linguistic formulations are not uniform about the same things—a conclusion that would receive an even greater emphasis in the discussions of language in the eighteenth century. With his definition of the triangle, Lamy chose an example that Descartes himself had used for the demonstration of the difference between pure thought and imagination, and it had circulated ever since in the pertinent literature. With the choice of this example, Lamy again underscored that he was primarily interested in questioning the suitability of rationalistic principles with regard to the sensuous essence of humanity and of language.

In the later revisions of his *Rhetoric*, Lamy continued to evaluate positively the sensuous faculty of perception and the powers of emotion. This increased consideration of the physiological foundations of thought and language finally led him in the last revision of his book to reject even one of the most generally accepted postulates of the day in rationalistic theories of grammar, namely that the foundations of word order are derived from innate “raison.” Within this theoretical framework, the succession of the parts of the sentence—subject/predicate/object/—was proclaimed to be the “ordre naturel,” or the word order naturally anchored in “raison.” All deviations from this normal order—all so-called inversions—were seen as the effect of “sensation” and the “imagination,” that is of human physical existence, and they were thus considered to be an impairment to linguistic clarity. Connected to this judgment was the apologetic argument (which was very welcome to national consciousness) concerning the relatively strictly normative French sentence structure and its extensive correspondence with the “ordre naturel.” This was a notion that was for a long time thereafter repeated as evidence for the particular logic and clarity of the French sentence.

The reasons Lamy gave for a rejection of the rationalistic conception of the “ordre naturel” were then further developed in the eighteenth-century sensualistic theory of language in a debate that found a broad response (see Chapter 9). And on the explosive question regarding the origin of language, Lamy displayed rudiments of the argument that would persist in the later debates about this problem (see Chapter 10).

There can be no doubt that Lamy wrote his *Rhetoric* as a follower of Cartesianism. In 1675, on the date the first edition was published, he lost his teaching position at the University of Angers because he had violated the prohibitions against teaching the philosophy of Descartes. The manuscript of his *Cours de Morale*, which was censored by the Sorbonne in the same connection, even put him in danger of being arrested.<sup>12</sup> In 1684, when Bayle's *Nouvelles de la République des Lettres* appeared in Holland and announced a new edition of the *Rhetoric*, Bayle emphasized that Lamy had written this work as a "bon cartésien."<sup>13</sup>

## 5 Language and sense perception in the controversy between Arnauld and Malebranche

A new stage in the debate about the sensuous capacity of representation and its use in language was introduced by Nicolas Malebranche<sup>1</sup> who, as one of the great followers of Descartes, further developed his dualism to an intense degree. In 1674, Malebranche began to publish his most important work, *On the Investigation of Truth, a Treatise on the Mind of Man and the necessary Manner of its Use in order to avoid Errors in the Sciences (De la recherche de la vérité, où l'on traite de l'esprit de l'homme, et de l'usage qu'il en doit faire pour éviter l'erreur dans les sciences)*.

The first two books of this work are concerned with the critique of sensory cognitive activity in human beings, especially of the “imagination” and of its role in language.<sup>2</sup> Malebranche drew even more far-reaching conclusions than Descartes had done from his own conception of the physically conditioned cognitive faculties, which, in contrast to pure thought, are burdened by the imperfection of the senses. The imagination, Malebranche argued, since it is the impression of sense perceptions called forth in the brain, is just as deceptive as the senses themselves.

Several chapters treat the misuse of the imagination in the language of some authors who captivate their readers by exploiting their audience's imagination and by eliminating rational arguments. The same deplorable quality is found in both Seneca's and Montaigne's styles, namely that they seek to convince the reader by eliminating rational reasoning. Whereas Pascal had proclaimed the highest admiration for Montaigne's style, Montaigne became for Malebranche a favorite target of criticism. Malebranche saw the greatest danger precisely in the pleasure that Montaigne's style afforded. For it leads the reader, without him being conscious of it, to particular opinions by appealing to the sensually determined cognitive faculties of the “imagination” and of “passion.” Every pleasure that the various styles are able to arouse generally results in the fact that people can be reached more easily through the senses than through their understanding. “Imagination” and “raison” exclude one another. Only a language that is entirely imbued with “raison” can be truthful.<sup>3</sup>

Goibaud Du Bois took up and consolidated Malebranche's repeated references to the danger of the “imagination” and its use in language in

order to attack contemporary rhetoric and pulpit eloquence.<sup>4</sup> Du Bois, who had formerly been an apprentice at Port-Royal, later avoided all such close contact with Arnauld and his friends. Although Port-Royal had already made translations of a few of St Augustine's works, Du Bois undertook the translation of several of his writings in which he made great efforts to adopt a deliberately sober style, and for which Boileau ascribed to him the impertinence of an ungrateful pupil.<sup>5</sup> Du Bois prefaced his translation of Augustine's homilies with the demand that eloquence ought only to appeal to pure intellect and under no circumstances to the physically determined cognitive faculties.

Instead of being a simple statement of truth, contemporary eloquence was, in his eyes, the art of arousing the "passions." Its reprehensibility is already evident in that it employs the "imagination," which, because of its dependence on the senses, prohibits the recognition of truth: "The *imagination* is the poison of the intellect, being the sole capacity that allows us to grasp truth, but it is only able to do so to the degree that the soul is freed from all representations of sensually perceptible things."<sup>6</sup>

Since such a language also distorts the truths of salvation, these may only be expressed in a style that forgoes every appeal to the sensuous capacities of representation. Preachers should therefore submit their language to the "ordre géométrique," which is synonymous with the "ordre de la raison."<sup>7</sup> From this rationalistic standpoint, which had been taken to an extreme conclusion, Pascal is contradicted just as much as the Port-Royal *Logic*, as well as Cordemoy's and Lamy's views on the modes of eloquence and its appeal to the senses.

The Benedictine François Lamy, who stood in close contact with Malebranche (and is not to be confused, as it has often occurred, with the orator Bernard Lamy, the author of the *Rhetoric* discussed above), sharpened the rationalistic argumentation of Malebranche and Du Bois even further and delivered an indictment of the "false" eloquence that is directed at the senses.

Rhetoric is an art that fills us solely with sensuous ideas and representations, an art that sets only the "imagination" into motion and speaks to the mind only by means of such a jolted "imagination."<sup>8</sup> ...It falsifies the natural taste for truth, it uses sensuous images and metaphors that are nothing but hellish shadows,...it is the art of convincing without "raison," the art of not being natural and of putting what is artificial in the place of nature and of impressing on the brain deep traces of the lowliest objects.<sup>9</sup>

Nothing stands more in the way of the recognition of truth than such impressions channelled to the brain through the senses. Just like Du Bois, François Lamy was more rationalistic than Descartes, and he based his judgment of the "imagination" on the observation that all cognition and the communication of truth are only possible when the pure intellect can fulfill

its task without being confused by the senses. Human nature rests on and is defined by “raison,” which is independent of all sense perception. A language that is supported by the sensuous capacity of representation and appeals to it thus leads us away from truth.

Arnauld gave a stinging answer to François Lamy’s condemnations and he wrote for that purpose his *Réflexions sur l’éloquence des prédicateurs*, originally intended as a letter to Du Bois (it appeared in 1695, the year after Arnauld’s death). Nicole, Bossuet, and even Boileau count among those who stood by Arnauld’s side. Boileau noted with especial satisfaction that Arnauld’s arguments had crushed his opponent.<sup>10</sup>

In their responses, Arnauld and his followers rejected the attempt to erect a barrier between the imagination and the intellect. For Arnauld, the essence of the imagination is not misleading; only its misuse is harmful. Arnauld contended, in fact, that without its aid, our intellect would hardly be able to understand things (“loin de faire tort à l’intelligence, on ne peut guère que par elle arriver à l’intelligence”).<sup>11</sup> For an endless number of people the imagination is therefore a great aid in finding access to truth in the first place. The truths of salvation reveal themselves to only a few of the devout by the sole means of the intellect. Most must rely on the mediating role of the imagination. Thus Arnauld categorically rejected the suggestion that preachers cannot use the imagination in order to teach the articles of salvation.

The epistemological consequences of this standpoint become even more explicit with Arnauld’s follower, Des Bords (*De la manière de prêcher*, 1700). Every Cartesian (!), he claimed, can only laugh at the idle talk taking place over the “tourbillon des imaginations,” the ostensible confusion of the sensuous faculty of representation. After all, all linguistic communication depends on sense perception. Thus it is absurd to maintain that the reference to sense activity contained in linguistic expressions endangers one’s ability to convey truth. For the Port-Royal *Logic* had emphasized that the signifying function of linguistic sounds or of their written forms presupposes their perception through the ear or the eyes. Des Bords concluded from his recognition of the necessity of the senses in the communication of thoughts—also emphasized by all of the otherwise dissimilar followers of Descartes—that it is just as natural to use language in order to move the images that have been impressed on the brain by sense perception as it is unavoidable to cause vibrations in the eardrum of one’s listener when one is speaking.<sup>12</sup> It is therefore completely impossible to eliminate the senses from the communication of truth, and this holds true for the truths of salvation as well.

When Gibert summarized the controversy between the opponents and followers of Arnauld soon thereafter, his repeated conclusion that even abstract ideas and the articles of faith are to be made intelligible through sensuous representations hardly went beyond Du Bord’s own thoughts. Yet Gibert summoned a quotation from the Bible: “true belief comes to us, so to speak, only by way of the senses” (“la foi en quelque façon ne nous vient

que par les sens”) as an argument against the extremely rationalistic conception of language and simultaneously as an argument for the rehabilitation of the sensuous faculty of representation. The philosophical dimension of this appeal to the Bible becomes apparent, in addition, through the very characteristic and doubtlessly deliberate alteration of the quotation: the Latin version, “fides ex auditu,” is rendered in Gibert’s French formulation as a reference to sense activity in general—“par les sens”—whereas all other French Bible translations follow the Latin and thus mention merely the specific sense of hearing.<sup>13</sup>

Gibert thus also puts the abstract “méthode géométrique” in its proper place, namely in the realm of scientific theories. For the world in which human beings feel, live, and act it is unsuitable. “The geometric method is the method of the understanding in the ordering of the mind, i.e. in matters concerning speculation, but it is not suitable for the ordering of taste, feeling and the affairs of life.”<sup>14</sup>

As Gibert’s informative attempt to demarcate two totally different meanings of the word “imagination” also reveals, the epistemological value of thinking that rests on sense perception was not called into question. For it was a matter, rather, of eliminating the confusion caused by the various uses of the word in the debate. Gibert thus concluded that, on the one hand, imagination “designates *erroneous opinion, false judgment*” and yet on the other indicates “our capacity to grasp things in the form of sensuous representation” (“une faculté que nous avons de concevoir les choses sous des images”).<sup>15</sup> In this second meaning, “imagination” thus includes even the cognitive faculty of “concevoir,” whereas Descartes had held “imaginer” and “concevoir” apart from one another and had assigned the latter faculty alone to the realm of “pure” thought.

The difference between the two meanings cited reflects the antagonism that had formed between the disputing parties about the role of the “imagination” in knowledge and language. In the meaning given by Arnauld and his followers, the cognitive faculty that is tied to the senses is acquitted of the onerous distinction with which extreme rationalism had burdened it. Arnauld’s opposition to Malebranche in the valuation of the sensuous faculty of representation and its role in language is a continuation of his general disagreement with Malebranche concerning the latter’s extremely rationalistic epistemology. A work by Arnauld that appeared in 1683, *Des vrayes et des fausses idées*, was not his first criticism of Malebranche, for he had already taken issue with him over the Jansenist doctrine of grace. But with this work, Arnauld attacked the very foundations of Malebranche’s occasionalism and his epistemology.

As one of the extreme consequences of his adaptation of Cartesian metaphysics, Malebranche’s occasionalism necessitated a view of ideas as being independent of both things and perceptions and as existing only in God, so that we see them only in God as well. Things are, according to this view, merely the occasional, but not the real causes of ideas. Arnauld

maintained to the contrary that the idea and perception form a unity. Only a number of fundamental ideas, such as extension, time, etc., are given to us by God. But all others are the result of our perception of things, from which, with the aid of our innate intellect, we develop general concepts.<sup>16</sup>

In its role as a fundamental rejection of Malebranche's thesis of the "vision en Dieu," *Des vrayes et des fausses idées* also takes up the issue of language in order to contradict Malebranche's assumption that the existence of the body is less certain than that of the mind—one of Descartes's postulates that Malebranche had also taken further. With his counter-argument based on language, Arnauld consciously changed one of Descartes's theses, that language was the external proof for the existence of the mind. Against Malebranche, that is, Arnauld produced a proof for the existence of the body from language itself!<sup>17</sup> Commentators have repeatedly pointed to Arnauld's willfulness in his interpretation of Cartesianism, and in this regard Sainte-Beuve also rightly underscored Arnauld's initiative.<sup>18</sup>

The young Arnauld's objections to Descartes's sixth meditation—in which Descartes had discussed precisely the relationship of body and soul, "imagination" and pure intellect—make his later high-handedness in dealing with this problem appear less surprising. In connection with the controversy with Descartes, Hobbes, and Gassendi, I have already pointed to the fact that Arnauld's remarks on Descartes's sixth meditation illustrated his awareness of the weaker links in the Cartesian system. He thought that Descartes's basic theses on the relationship between body and soul and the automatism of animals had not been sufficiently proven in the face of the opposing claim that all thought was physical and that the assumption of non-corporeal thought was merely a product of the human abstractive powers; a thesis, furthermore, that was supported by the notion that all cognitive capacity seems to be tied to the physical organs and which, according to Arnauld, all those who godlessly disavowed the soul made their primary argument. Thus Arnauld made a confession of faith when he finally stated his allegiance to Descartes's differentiation between body and soul and the parallel differentiation resulting therefrom between "imagination" and "pensée."<sup>19</sup> In the meantime, however, Arnauld considered the assumption as yet unproven that animals, as purely material beings, possess no soul and no cognitive capacities whatsoever, since in view of the complexity of animal behavior, Descartes's purely mechanistic explanation hardly seemed credible.<sup>20</sup>

Arnauld was certainly more interested here in producing a convincing proof of dualism and of its applicability to living beings than in doubting its validity. Nevertheless, a few decades later Arnauld's controversy with Malebranche demonstrated the polarization to which Descartes's epistemology could lead.

Some have gone so far as to see Arnauld as a predecessor of Locke, because of his tendency toward an empirical interpretation of Cartesian

epistemology.<sup>21</sup> In view of Arnauld's repeated warnings about Gassendi's sensualism, this may be exaggerated, despite the fact that Locke relied on Arnauld when he stated his opinion of Malebranche.<sup>22</sup> Such a characterization of Arnauld also lacks a consideration of the specifically Jansenistic foundations of his thought. The fact remains, however, that his rejection of Malebranche's epistemology, as well as his position in the debate about the imagination, demonstrated his inclination toward an empirical interpretation of Descartes's epistemology and a positive theoretical evaluation of sense perception. Representatives of a sensualistic epistemology and linguistic theory thus incorporated some of Arnauld's viewpoints into a context that made them into arguments against rationalism. In this way, the controversy between Arnauld and Malebranche about epistemology underscores as well the theoretical range of the arguments surrounding the use of the sensuous faculty of representation in language.

As the point of intersection of the physical and intellectual components of human thought, the imagination had to become the object of varying and controversial opinions that expressed the opposition between rationalistic and sensualistic points of view, but it also illustrated the differentiation among the opinions within the ranks of Descartes's followers themselves.

We have seen that in their polemic against Descartes's concept of pure thought, Gassendi and Hobbes considered the imagination to be the indispensable intermediate stage between sense perception and more abstract forms of cognition. In the wake of Descartes, then, the extreme rationalism of Malebranche correlated with a radical condemnation of the imagination, whereas the moderate rationalism of Arnauld combined with the tendency to revalorize sensory cognition. These were clearly divergent points of view, and the antagonists in polemical debates about language as an instrument of communicating truth were also highly conscious of them. Thus we saw Gibert, who neatly summarized this debate, recommend that one distinguish between a negative and a positive meaning of the word imagination.<sup>23</sup>

Given such controversial points of view it will be no surprise that the term imagination accrued different meanings. Related to this problem is the difficulty which we still face today of translating "imagination" into German. An approximately literal translation is the German word "Einbildung." And, indeed, earlier texts use the word "Einbildung" to render imagination, and thus follow the meaning of the French "image" (Latin "imago") or "Bild" (= picture, image). Taken literally, the imagination is thus the intellectual reawakening of the image of an object, that is its "Einbildung" in thought. According to the rationalistic as well as the sensualistic view, this process is connected with the renewal of the respective sense impression in the brain.

In the middle of the eighteenth century, a work on epistemology referred to the confusion that was caused by the ambiguity of the German words "Einbildungskraft" and "Einbildung." In the enumeration of the different and

partially conflicting meanings, the first place was taken by the negative meaning that is the valid one:

- 1 “Einbildung” sometimes means error, or an unfounded illusion. Only then do the positive meanings follow:
- 2 The power of creating a lively representation of the ideas of visible objects even when one no longer perceives the objects.
- 3 In general the capacity of the understanding to interpret something absolutely and positively.<sup>24</sup>

While the German “Einbildung” has now been restricted to the first meaning, the French “imagination” still has different meanings that in some cases are almost antithetical to one another. On the one hand it signifies the intellectual capacity for representation as well as the capacity for creative thought. Yet “imagination” can also designate illusory ideas and thus have approximately the same meaning as “Einbildung.” These differences in the meaning of “imagination” are an extension of the conflicting evaluations of the sensuous faculty of representation from the rationalistic and sensualistic points of view during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The exclusively negative meaning that the rationalistic interpretation gave to the German word “Einbildung” will probably never be altered.

## **6 Language and the epistemological evaluation of the senses from Descartes to Locke and Du Bos: the outcome of the seventeenth century**

The following comments will show that the revalorization of the “imagination” and of its role in language that occurred in the course of the second half of the seventeenth century led directly to Du Bos’s sensualistic aesthetics, which owed a great deal to Locke’s philosophy.

I have demonstrated the outlines of a development during the course of which the body and soul problem, which Descartes’s dualism formulated, brought forth divergent interpretations concerning the foundations and role of language. Descartes’s rationalistic interpretation of language as an expression of non-corporeal thought was presented as an argument supporting his dualism. Hobbes and Gassendi responded to this view from a sensualistic perspective and, in turn, also incorporated aspects of linguistic philosophy into their arguments, together with references to the physical bases of thought, and they saw in the imagination a necessary intermediate step between sense perception and abstract thought.

But a divergent development resulted among Descartes’s successors and even from within Cartesian philosophy itself. In Malebranche’s extreme rationalism, this led to a radical devaluation of the imagination as a cognitive faculty and therewith of its role in language, whereas another line of development showed an increasingly positive portrayal of the sensuous faculty of representation and of its significance for language. After the first beginnings of opposition in the Port-Royal *Logic* of 1662, Arnauld stepped forward with his polemics against the followers of Malebranche, and as a committed advocate of the sensuous faculty of representation in language.

In the intervening period, Cordemoy had incorporated Descartes’s psychophysiology into his own investigations of language. In the process, he described the physical foundations of both language and thought and at the same time demanded the arousal of the physically conditioned cognitive faculties to occasion rhetorical effect. Shortly thereafter, the Cartesian Bernard Lamy published an extensive treatment of psychophysiological aspects favoring the use of the “imagination” and “passion” in language. In the final version of his *Rhetoric* in 1701, Lamy employed psychophysiological arguments to reject a rationalistic theory of grammar

that postulated an innate *natural* word order. Cordemoy's and Lamy's theories make it clear that using a rationalistic dualistic scheme to interpret language became increasingly problematic according to the degree to which they incorporated the psychological factors of thought and language that Descartes had sketched out.

Those sympathetic to a revalorization of the imagination, such as Arnauld, Cordemoy, and Lamy, had taken a stance toward the issue first as philosophers. The fact that no less a person than Boileau (who noted, we remember, with particular satisfaction that his opponent had been annihilated by Arnauld's arguments) became an ally of Arnauld in this matter is not only an expression of Boileau's sympathies for Jansenism; it underscores at the same time the general literary relevance of the problem.

The literary aesthetics of the epoch demonstrated a certain parallel with aspects of the debate over linguistic theory we have previously encountered. The frequently invoked "raison" of the seventeenth century exhibits a scale of variable meanings that cannot be reduced to a single rationalistic principle.<sup>1</sup> One can certainly find an indebtedness to Descartes's world-view in Boileau's literary works. But the nineteenth-century attempt to explain Cartesian rationalism as the root of Boileau's literary aesthetics is untenable.<sup>2</sup> Boileau himself had accused the geometrical spirit of Descartes's philosophy with having cut the throat of poetry.<sup>3</sup> Boileau's dictum, "Aimez donc la raison" does not contradict his demand that one view the linguistic appeal to the senses as an essential component of literature, and precisely not as the stereotypical formulation of the conflict between sense activity and reason, or "sens" and "raison" (*Art poétique*, chant II). When he expressed his satisfaction that Arnauld had "crushed" one of the most zealous opponents of the imagination, he basically demonstrated the same attitude that, in his poetics, had led him to erect the opposition between cold reason ("froids raisonnements") and the appeal to human emotions directed at the senses.<sup>4</sup> Newer investigations have pointed out the language of sensibility in the literature of the seventeenth century and the literary-aesthetic relevance of the debate over the linguistic role of the imagination at the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth centuries.<sup>5</sup>

Even La Bruyère and Fénelon, that is, two authors whose thoughts and language reach past the seventeenth century into the Enlightenment, turned against a strict standardization of the French language and advocated a style directed at the sensuous faculty of representation.<sup>6</sup> Fénelon theoretically enlarged and applied to his own literary practice La Bruyère's demand for a style that painted in a lively manner ("peindre vivement"), which referred to the imagination. Fénelon's *Dialogues sur l'éloquence* declare an emphatic allegiance to the use of the imagination; that is, they favor Arnauld's own stance as it was traced in the debate discussed above. At every turn, Fénelon's text employs the slogans of that eloquence which strives to appeal to the senses, such as the impression of things, lively impression, moving paintings, lively images, speaking in a sensible manner, the lively fashion in

which the imagination is seized (“imprimer les choses, vive impression, peinture touchante, images vives, parler d’une manière sensible, manière vive qui saisit l’imagination”).<sup>7</sup>

The style of “raisonnement” and of dry instruction stands in opposition to a manner of expression that is, thus, aimed at sense perception.<sup>8</sup> In order to justify his stylistic demands, Fénelon also referred to the Bible, Augustine, and ancient rhetoric. Yet in his formulation of the classical rhetorical principles of *probare*, *delectare*, and *movere*, he undertook a suggestive substitution when he rendered them as *prouver*, *peindre*, and *toucher* and hence, with the replacement of *delectare* by *peindre*, emphasized the appeal to the senses much more immediately—a change that was criticized as arbitrariness on Fénelon’s part.<sup>9</sup> But the change was a conscious characterization of a style that addressed the imagination.

Fénelon made the same demands in his *Réflexions sur la grammaire, la rhétorique, la poétique et l’histoire*, which he elaborated as a program proposal for the Académie Française in 1714 and usually cited as the *Lettre à l’Académie*. The strict standardization of French and the uniformity of French sentence structure seemed to be an impediment to the expression of emotions as well as to phonetic harmony. With the “Project for the enrichment of language” proposed in this treatise, Fénelon was thus aiming toward a freer poetic style. In his novel, *Les aventures de Télémaque* of 1699, he had already introduced a prose whose poetic qualities, such as lively fiction, bold figures, beauty and variety of images, had to be defended against the reproach that the more appropriate verse form had not been chosen for the Telemachus theme.<sup>10</sup>

After the appearance of Fénelon’s program proposal, there was a new controversy in which the advocates of a greater flexibility in French sentence structure benefited from the preceding debate about the role of the imagination in language.<sup>11</sup> In his *Défense de la poésie française* of 1717, Du Cerceau supported his argument for a flexible sentence structure by positively evaluating the sensuous bases of language. A year later, Gamache’s *Les Agréments du langage réduits à leurs principes* also demanded a lively style that appealed to the imagination and not to the “esprit” and to that end employed grammatical and oratorical paintings (“peintures grammaticales, oratoires”).<sup>12</sup>

Immediately thereafter, in 1719, Du Bos’s *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et sur la peinture* appeared. “Raison” is dismissed as the highest authority in judgments of taste, and sensation, the language of the heart (“coeur”), is proclaimed to be the definitive judge. “Impression” and “sentiment” are to decide the value or the lack thereof in a work of art. One is to place unqualified trust in their judgment, Du Bos argued, for one is seldom led astray by the distinct perception of one’s senses.<sup>13</sup>

Du Bos’s new sensualistic aesthetics carried out a synthesis of the arguments in the preceding debate concerning the role of the imagination, including its reference to ancient rhetoric, and Locke’s philosophical

influence. The evidence we have of Du Bos's interest in the debate about the imagination in language is just as reliable as is that of his friendship and exchange of ideas with Locke.<sup>14</sup>

The arguments that the advocates of the imagination advanced automatically fit into Du Bos's sensualistic aesthetics. In this connection, one chapter in particular of the *Réflexions* is exemplary: "On the Poetry of the Style in which Words are seen as the Signs of our Ideas."<sup>15</sup> The method of emotional persuasion and the linguistic appeal to the sensuous capacity of representation are closely combined with one another. The poetry of style consists above all in using *images* that are capable of *moving us*. Formulations such as "images that represent paintings to our imagination...these verses draw paintings in the imagination"<sup>16</sup> remind us of Lamy's reference to the simultaneity of sense impressions and of their arousal in the imagination.

It is no surprise that Malebranche and his extremely rationalistic interpretation of style again encountered opposition here: in an ironic comment, he accused Malebranche, who was a militant advocate of "raisonnement sévère," of the contradiction of having written a book full of "imagination" against the "imagination." For Malebranche also could not have done without the expressive means that address the sensuous faculty of representation.

One of the greatest advocates of the strict style of thought, Malebranche, has written a book against the danger of a strong imagination, whose seductive power consists of its wealth of images and its capacity to represent objects in a lively fashion. One should, however, not think that a dry precision is predominant in his own style, that he dispenses with all of the figures that can move and seduce us, or that he limits himself to logical deductions. His style is full of lively impressions and paintings, and he appeals to our imagination in order to dilate on the misuse of the imagination.<sup>17</sup>

When he discusses word order and its aesthetic function, Du Bos adopts the standpoint elaborated in the last edition of Lamy's *Rhetoric* against the rationalistic theory of the "ordre naturel": Latin is superior to French as an expressive medium of poetry because, as a result of its free word order, it is better suited to produce images.<sup>18</sup>

The readiness with which Du Bos incorporated into his sensualistic aesthetics important aspects of the debate over the role of sense perception that had been going on throughout the last quarter of the seventeenth century underscores yet again the fact that the advocates of the imagination had, in this debate, begun to abandon the position of a rationalistic conception of language. Indeed, Lamy had been a precursor to Du Bos even in the introduction of climate as a factor differentiating taste and style.

A scholarly study, entitled *Rhetoric as a Source of Preromantic Irrationalism in the History of Ideas and Literature*,<sup>19</sup> attempted to explain

the retreat of rationalistic principles in aesthetics at the turn of the seventeenth century as something other than the expression of a new philosophical orientation. Instead of fixing an epistemological concept of truth as being universally valid, only the principle of effect, which was taken from ancient rhetoric, is seen as the determining factor in the eighteenth-century evaluation of sense activity and of the emotions.

There were certainly numerous authors who borrowed their emphasis on the emotional effects of speech, and on a figurative language directed at the senses, from Cicero's and Quintilian's codified systems of rhetoric. But in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the adoption of these elements, which provided basic categories to the new philosophies of aesthetics, only occurred in the sense of an aesthetics of effect, which was untouched by the epistemological problem of the concept of truth.

It is even attested that Du Bos's theory of the pre-eminence of the senses is actually "no more than what Quintilian says"; a judgment that the addition, "to be sure, strengthened by Locke's influence,"<sup>20</sup> can hardly modify. Du Bos's indebtedness to Quintilian, who is cited approximately ninety times in the *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et la peinture*, is undeniable. Yet this does not limit the central importance of sensualistic philosophy for Du Bos's aesthetics. Even in the pertinent comments by Pascal, Cordemoy, Bernard Lamy, by Arnauld and his disciples, as well as by Fénelon, we find indisputable evidence that, with respect to the emotional function of language and figurative expressions, these writers borrowed from ancient rhetoric, whether it was directly from Cicero and Quintilian, or from St Augustine, who had recommended rhetorical rules for the propagation of faith.

The relationship to the contemporary philosophical questions and debates that were traced in the discussion above are, however, as indisputable as are their indebtedness to ancient rhetoric. Descartes's doctrine of the movements of the soul and his epistemological classification of the imagination were always present to an author such as Arnauld whenever he spoke of the emotional powers of style. The same is true for Cordemoy and Lamy, who very consciously treated the precepts of ancient rhetoric on the basis of Cartesian psychophysiology. But even the sensualistic arguments that were advanced in the great debate between the Cartesians and the Gassendists were not unknown to Arnauld and Lamy. Thus it is all the more remarkable how these two authors and their followers emphasized the positive role that the affects and the sensual faculty of representation play in the construction of style and in the communication of truth. When Cordemoy, Lamy, Arnauld, and Fénelon as well, advocated the use of the imagination they were just as concerned with the problem of truth as with that of rhetorical effect. The sensuous faculty of representation was seen, after all, as a far more important factor in the linguistic communication of ideas—including the truths of salvation—than pure thought.

Even the necessity of a governing role of "raison" over the imagination, which is based on sense perception, receded more and more into the

background. The retreat of an exaggerated rationalism is unmistakable. The same tendency is apparent in the repeated delimitation of language as opposed to the principles of mathematics, the science that was so closely associated with rationalism that, from a sensualistic standpoint, the later collapse of rationalism was also seen to have sealed the fate of mathematics as well.<sup>21</sup>

It was precisely owing to the fact that the tradition of ancient rhetoric stood between the debates about the sensuous faculty of representation and the nature of humanity that this tradition acquired its relevance for the seventeenth-century debate about linguistics.

At first glance it must come as some surprise that an increasingly positive evaluation of the imagination in language, together with a critical posture toward the “*esprit géométrique*,” occurred without a disavowal of Descartes. Arnauld’s readiness to display a certain arbitrariness in his adoption of Cartesianism was not the sole or even the most important reason why both advocates as well as opponents of the use of the imagination and passions could appeal to Descartes and the advocates of the imagination could expressly count themselves among the “*philosophes cartésiens*.”<sup>22</sup> Rather, the most important causes of the rise of such differences were the contradictions within Cartesian dualism itself.

Cordemoy’s use of Cartesian psychophysiology in his investigation of language was an attempt to unify the various theoretical interpretations of language inherent in Cartesianism. The task was not easy: on the one hand language was a physical and hence imperfect instrument for the expression of the ideas of a non-corporeal soul; thus the mention of a mode of communication of ideas that was free of all corporeality was the ideal form of communication corresponding to the actual nature of thought. On the other hand, however, it demanded an exhaustive description of the physiological foundations of thought and language that depended on the assumption of an automatism of physical processes and of the necessity of the body for the communication of ideas. It required a description that finally granted a relative perfection to the bodily functions associated with thinking and speaking. Thus not only speaking, but thinking as well were seen to a great extent as being dependent upon the bodily organs, above all upon the condition of the brain.

In addition, there was, on the one hand, the notion that non-corporeal thought was the true essence of humanity as it expressed itself in language and differentiated us from animals. And, on the other hand, there was the power that the physically conditioned cognitive faculties of the imagination and passion had over humans; there was thus for these reasons, therefore, the necessity of using these faculties in linguistic communication. Furthermore, the imagination was seen as an inescapable physiological basis for every linguistic act of communication in both speaker and listener.

The opinions of the opposing parties in the conflict about the role of the imagination could therefore be derived from Cartesianism with approximately

the same logical validity. The emphasis of the rationalistic doctrine on non-corporeal thought made the condemnation of the imagination appear to be self-evident. However, the accentuation of the necessity of the body for all communication of thought stood opposed to this notion. Using Cartesian psychophysiology to interpret linguistic and cognitive processes thus delimited the scope of the rationalistic doctrine of non-corporeal thought in proportion to the degree to which doubts concerning the effectiveness of the bodily organs for thought and the communication of ideas grew smaller.

Thus both of the opposing standpoints in the debate about the imagination in language harked back to Descartes. They are basically an expression of the contradiction inherent between Descartes's physics and his metaphysics; that contradiction whose possible consequences La Mettrie had already indicated when he claimed that all of Descartes's talk about the two substances had been a mere trick to deceive the theologians. Because he had not dared to express his true opinion, Descartes had given his portrayal of matter that could feel and think a disguise in the form of his theory of a non-corporeal soul.<sup>23</sup>

Similar, if not so pointed, speculations had already been aired during Descartes's lifetime. In the seventeenth century some thinkers had already pointed to the fact that, by including living creatures into his mechanistic world-view, Descartes had flirted with the danger of a materialistic interpretation. And in the eighteenth century, La Mettrie was not the only one to suspect there was a diversion involved in Descartes's doctrine of the two substances, behind which, in reality, he wanted to reveal the physical nature of thought. The further development of Cartesianism that we witness in Fontenelle and Sylvain Régis shows that, in their qualification of his dualism and in their tendency toward an empirical interpretation of his epistemology, Descartes's disciples were able to make an approach to a sensualistic position. And Pierre Bayle, whose important early Enlightenment work was much indebted to Descartes, viewed Descartes's hypothesis of innate ideas as having been refuted after the appearance of Locke's sensualistic manifesto.<sup>24</sup>

Antoine Arnauld's interpretation of Cartesianism is different. I have already indicated that Arnauld's opposition against an extreme rationalism was combined with a simultaneous explicit rejection of sensualism. The same is not true of Fontenelle who, three years after the publication of Arnauld's work, *Des vrayes et des fausses idées*, expressed solidarity with his intention of stripping occasionalism of all philosophical authority. In his *Doutes sur le système physique des causes occasionnelles* of 1686, Fontenelle emphasized that he had disproved occasionalism in mechanics, and that he had left the difficult questions of epistemology and theology to Arnauld, whose intention it had after all been "to overturn Malebranche's entire system."<sup>25</sup> To be sure, Fontenelle went so far as to express doubts about the legitimacy of Cartesian dualism. The thesis of the fundamental difference between mind and matter had caused Descartes to invent those occasional causes which Malebranche

then further developed in order to be able to explain the co-operation of both substances. Fontenelle's *Histoire des oracles*, which appeared immediately thereafter in 1687, showed what kind of questionable ally he must have been for the champions of the faith.

Arnauld and Fontenelle had yet another common adversary whom we have come to know as one of the most vociferous opponents of the imagination, namely François Lamy. Since he considered sensory ideas to be fundamentally misleading, he rejected, in opposition to Arnauld, the use of the imagination in language and also objected to Arnauld's opinion that human beings were able to recognize truth on their own, so that the vision in God that Malebranche postulated was superfluous.<sup>26</sup> The same François Lamy also wrote a treatise against Fontenelle's criticism of occasionalism.<sup>27</sup>

The rejection of Malebranche's extreme rationalism was thus common to both Arnauld and Fontenelle. Yet Fontenelle's point of departure and conclusions were entirely different from those of Arnauld, whose zeal in the campaign against occasionalism was inspired by his wish to protect the faith from the danger of pantheism that he thought arose from Malebranche's tenets. Fontenelle, on the other hand, had so thoroughly absorbed an empirically scientific standpoint by the eighties that he was actually no longer even a Cartesian. It is evident, however, that Fontenelle's early writings presuppose sensualistic principles.<sup>28</sup> Fontenelle's acquaintance with Gassendi and Bernier is documented as having occurred at the same time. In Fontenelle's case, it is certainly conceivable that the "encouragement toward the then newly arising materialistic and sensualistic tendencies"<sup>29</sup> that came from Gassendi furthered his critical evaluation of rationalistic principles.

The several parallels Fontenelle exhibits with regard to Cordemoy and Bernard Lamy are therefore all the more remarkable. Fontenelle's differentiation between the idea of words and the idea of things and his reference to the combination of both in consciousness practically force us to conclude that he borrowed arguments concerning the impression of words and the impression of things from either Cordemoy or Lamy. Fontenelle also offered the same physiological explanation for the differences in intellectual abilities that Cordemoy and Lamy had listed for the capacities of comprehension and speaking.<sup>30</sup> In the same work, Fontenelle arrived at the conclusion in 1688 that a large portion of Cartesian philosophy was refuted by Descartes's own doctrine of method. On the basis of his considerations of the similarities between the brain functions of humans and beasts, Fontenelle deduced, responding to Descartes, that animals think and hence are not machines.<sup>31</sup> Yet there is no certain evidence that Fontenelle had theoretically justified his own turn toward sensualism with linguistic philosophy.

Such diverse authors as Gassendi, Hobbes and Comenius all included ideas concerning linguistic theory in their sensualistic programs. In the debate about the origin of language, Gassendi adopted the hypothesis of

Epicurus and Lucretius, which in the eighteenth century was extended even further within sensualistic theory. For Hobbes, a sensuous marker or sign was a necessary aid to thought, and we have seen that the dependence of language on thought was one of his most weighty objections against Descartes.

Comenius' sensualistic confession found a broadly based public response. In his works on language pedagogy, which quickly became famous and of which the best known bears the significant title *Orbis sensualium pictus* (1654), Comenius opposed rationalism and advocated a sensualistic language methodology. As a justification of his method, he not only cited the traditional maxim: *in intellectu nihil autem est, quod non prius fuerit in sensu*, but he added a declaration of war on rationalism that he emphasized with bold print: *sensualia recte praesententur sensibus*.<sup>32</sup> The subject matter must be communicated with the aid of sense perceptions and must be assimilated to them in order that it acquire the qualities that are decisive for success in instruction: *clarum, distinctum articulatam, tanquam digiti manus*.<sup>33</sup> Descartes's criteria of "clare et distincte" for certain knowledge were thus accommodated to sense perception itself. The primary task of instruction was to develop and train the senses, which were therefore seen as the basis of all knowledge.

If one wishes to characterize more fully the debate about language at the end of the seventeenth century in connection with the history of philosophy, it is important to mention that the French public was already familiar with important aspects of Lockean sensualism. Ever since 1688, extensive excerpts from Locke's main philosophical work were available in French translation,<sup>34</sup> even before the complete English original appeared two years later. At present I cannot say with certainty whether Locke's publication had already had an influence on the seventeenth-century French debate concerning language. Yet there can be no doubt that Locke was himself indebted to the French debate.

Among the books that Locke took back to England with him, or which he arranged to have sent after his trip to France from 1675 to 1679,<sup>35</sup> were Malebranche's *De la recherche de la vérité*, the Port-Royal *Grammar and Logic*, and Arnauld's *Des vrayes et des fausses idées*, whose arguments against occasionalism Locke later advanced in his own essay against Malebranche's *Vision in God*.<sup>36</sup> he also possessed Lamy's *Rhetoric*, the *Janua aurea linguarum* by Comenius, Bernier's multi-volume compendium of Gassendi's philosophy, and the only work to have appeared in print by the Benedictine Dom Robert Des Gabets. This was a Gassendist response to Malebranche's dualism. Des Gabets maintained the unity of sense perception and thought. He thought that even abstract thought, "intellection pure," had its origin in the senses.<sup>37</sup> Otherwise Des Gabets appeared in various circles and he carried on an extensive correspondence as a critic of Descartes and here, too, championed the corporeality of the soul and thoughts.<sup>38</sup>

Lamy's *Rhetoric* was published in 1675, in the same year as Des Gabets's critique of Malebranche appeared, and Lamy also did not share Malebranche's extremely negative judgment of the senses and the imagination, even if he did not renounce Descartes altogether. Just before that date, Gassendi's views had come to the forefront again through Bernier, but Malebranche had himself advanced his own extreme form of rationalism. Such a flurry of publications in philosophy immediately before Locke's trip to France gives an indication of the atmosphere of controversy he encountered in Paris.<sup>39</sup>

We cannot answer the question here whether or to what extent Locke was indebted to the debate concerning language that had previously occurred in France. The extensive treatment of language in Locke's *Essay* and the fact that he procured the pertinent French publications attest at least to the interest with which he followed the French debate.

## **Part II**

# **Language, anthropology and history in the Enlightenment**



## 7 A century of controversy

When in 1799 a work appeared under the title, *On Language with Regard to the History of Humanity*, the author emphasized in his introduction the amount of literature on linguistics with which he had familiarized himself: "Circumstances favored me so that I was able to procure close to 600 major and minor works about languages."<sup>1</sup> This reference to the quantity of available publications about linguistic topics is just as representative for the eighteenth century as is the association of interest in language with an interest in the history of humanity expressed in the title of the book.

One could hardly name a single leading representative of the Enlightenment in France who did not contribute to the debate about language. Du Marsais, Voltaire, Condillac, Diderot, d'Alembert, Rousseau, Helvétius, and Turgot all expressed their opinions about language as advocates of the Enlightenment. For the eighteenth-century public who were interested in language, the range of the problems went more and more beyond the particular questions of the norm-setting usage, so that in theoretically oriented works, functions of language for the human individual and for society as a whole were placed in the center of inquiry. And, as in France, in Italy, England," Germany, Spain, and Russia, too, this preoccupation with language occurred within the framework established in each case by the respective national manifestations of the Enlightenment.<sup>2</sup>

In Germany, Leibniz and Wolff illustrate a predominately rationalistic orientation in their discussion and analysis of the French and English sources, whereas Herder demonstrated a more sensualistic tendency of thought concerning language theory. Ever since the middle of the eighteenth century, the problem of language stood on the agenda of the Berlin Academy of Sciences when it held its debates, and was one of the topics for the academic prize questions out of which Herder's essay on the origin of language arose. In 1777, under the uninformative title *On Language and Writing*, there appeared a two-volume translation of De Brosses's work on the philosophy of language, which was originally titled *Traité de la formation mécanique des langues et des principes physiques de l'étymologie*

(1765). Yet in his foreword, the translator mentioned that it was “a fashionable preoccupation among the philosophers in Germany” to have an interest in such topics as “investigations of language, its mechanical formation, its resultant human origin, the perfection or imperfection of the same, its more or less advantageous influence on the human mind, in short, the philosophy of language.”<sup>3</sup>

In England and Italy, the same problems were also being debated.<sup>4</sup> The interpretation of language is constitutive of Vico’s concept of history and he anticipated positions advocated in eighteenth-century French sensualistic theories of language, without, however, there being any certain evidence that he had an influence on either Condillac or Rousseau.

Despite considerably increased efforts in recent years, we still do not have an even approximately complete notion of the publications that appeared in France in the eighteenth century that just refer to linguistic themes in their titles, not to mention an actual incorporation of linguistic topics in philosophical, historiographical, and scientific works.

Important texts, whose titles at first glance would not lead one to suppose that they play an essential role in considerations of linguistic theory, are Condillac’s *Essai sur l’origine des connaissances humaines* of 1746, Diderot’s *Lettre sur les sourds et muets* of 1751, and Rousseau’s *Discours sur l’origine et les fondements de l’inégalité parmi les hommes* of 1755. Condillac’s *Essai* bases its sensualistic explanation of thought, which goes decidedly beyond Locke, on a new hypothesis of the natural origin and development of language. Diderot’s *Lettre sur les sourds et muets* combines the same problems with fundamental epistemological and aesthetic questions. Rousseau’s *Discours sur l’inégalité* describes language as the instrument by which the domination of one part of society over the other is formed and consolidated. In Helvétius’s works, *De l’esprit* of 1758 and *De l’homme, de ses facultés intellectuelles et de son éducation* (posthumously published in 1772), the portrayal of the misuse of language as an expression of a corrupt social order is, like that of Rousseau, a combination of language criticism with social criticism.

Moving on to the work of a lesser-known author, in his book of 1788, entitled *Anthropologie ou science générale de l’homme*, A.C.Chavannes derived from Condillac’s thesis concerning the constitutive function of language in thought a program for the development of human intellectual capacities; the author thus understood his “anthropology” as an introduction to the study of languages.<sup>5</sup>

The following chapters will provide examples of how eighteenth-century historiographic, literary, and even scientific texts took up linguistic themes.<sup>6</sup>

Judged by the number of new publications and reprints of them, dictionaries and grammars offer perhaps the most conspicuous testimony to the interest in language in eighteenth-century France. A comprehensive newer study on the history of French lexicology lists for the eighteenth century, without making any claim to completeness, approximately 650 titles of new

publications and reprints of single and multilingual dictionaries in French.<sup>7</sup> If one includes in this list encyclopedias covering all of the various scientific and technical disciplines, then one is faced with a form of lexicography that was characteristic of the Enlightenment and its concerns, namely to make available and propagate the newest state of knowledge in the different areas of the sciences in a readily accessible form. Pierre Bayle's monumental *Dictionnaire historique et critique* of 1695–7, which was repeatedly reprinted and translated in the course of the eighteenth century, was, as a critique of the traditional notion of history, a path-breaking work and a constantly consulted source during the Enlightenment. Diderot's and d'Alembert's *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des Sciences, des Arts et des Métiers* (1751–80), the greatest publishing venture of the eighteenth century and probably the most important single publication of the Enlightenment, is simultaneously a scientific encyclopedia and a dictionary of the French language.

In this capacity as well, the *Encyclopédie* demonstrates what numerous eighteenth-century dictionaries and encyclopedias had in common, and it underscores the particular appropriateness of the *dictionnaire* for the concerns of the Enlightenment: the conscious and often frank opinions expressed not only on linguistic, but also on many philosophical, aesthetic, political, and scientific problems and controversies of the period.

Voltaire's *Dictionnaire philosophique* of 1764, and the anti-Enlightenment response it encountered in the *Dictionnaire anti-philosophique* of 1767,<sup>8</sup> illustrate the immediate partisanship either for or against the Enlightenment that took place over the form of the publication of the *dictionnaire*.

Yet even in the different dictionaries there was no lack of occasionally massive endorsements of opinions that went well beyond a purely linguistic interest. The most extensive of these are the multi-volume monolingual dictionary series that began to appear at the turn of the seventeenth century and then appeared in several expanded new editions: the *Dictionnaire* of the Académie Française, the even more voluminous dictionaries by Richelet and by Furetière, and the Jesuit-inspired *Dictionnaire de Trévoux*; its primary targets were the Jansenists, and it secondarily provided a forum for anti-Enlightenment opinion.

Even the arguments about concepts that stood in the center of the debate on language philosophy, and whose points of origin we saw in the seventeenth century, are reflected in these dictionaries. Under entries such as "âme," "automate," "langage," and "machine" one encounters the echo of the disputes about the application of Cartesian dualism to the interpretation of human beings and language, often with an expression of support for or against the disciples of Descartes. And the impressive number of contemporary dictionaries devoted to such controversial linguistic issues as synonymy or neology demonstrates a commitment to something other than solely linguistic topics, even though it was again clothed in lexicographical terminology.

Desfontaines's *Dictionnaire néologique*, the first edition of which appeared in 1726, explicitly expressed ideological and aesthetic partisanship in its critique of a modernistic renewal of language. During the course of the century, the advocates of neology, which was seen as a necessary and sensible enrichment of language, gained the upper hand. In the debate about neology, they contrasted the elitist "bon usage" concept with the demand that everyone, while taking into consideration the character of the language, has the right to create and put into currency new words or word meanings. It may come as no surprise that neology triumphed during the years of the Revolution, but it also stood in the center of the linguistic polemics between the advocates and the opponents of the Revolution. In view of Napoleon's cravings for power, Louis-Sébastien Mercier's *Néologie ou vocabulaire de mots nouveaux* of 1801 was a declaration for the preservation of the Republic.<sup>9</sup>

With Girard's *La justesse de la langue française, ou les différentes significations des mots qui passent pour synonymes* of 1718, a new wave of synonym dictionaries began. The differentiations in meaning noted or suggested here were also an aspect of the lexicological development that garnered attention within the scope of neology. One impulse for the consideration and analysis of French synonyms came from the debate about the wealth of language that arose in connection with the "Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes," one of whose points of contention concerned the expressive capacity of modern French in comparison with the classical languages.<sup>10</sup> But the tendency of sensualistic theories to consider and differentiate individuality and the corresponding sensitivity and discrimination they showed toward expression (in this era, the rise of the word "nuance" occurred<sup>11</sup>), all of this also contributed to an increasing awareness of synonyms. Toward the end of the century, some saw the preoccupation with synonyms retrospectively as "one of the fevers of this epoch."<sup>12</sup>

The preceding overview concerns lexicographic publications and debates on the norms of the standard language. But the contemporary lexicographic interest also extended to regional variants of French and even to Old French. And, to a considerable degree, knowledge about foreign languages is also present in the dictionaries. Dictionaries and grammars of foreign languages increasingly included non-European languages, in the process of which political, commercial, missionary, ethnological, and linguistic considerations were fused.

However, the interest in non-European languages and writing systems also interacted with the philosophical debates on language. Thus, Chinese characters and Egyptian hieroglyphs, along with Mexican picture writing, unleashed a lengthy debate.<sup>13</sup> Above all, it was the interest in a universal writing system that precipitated this debate, a desire that was influenced by the rationalistic hope for a universal language that would be as adequate as possible to thought. During the eighteenth century, the older problem of the arbitrariness of the linguistic sign, which some hoped to resolve by

instituting a universally comprehensible system of written signs, was complicated by the addition of the epistemological and aesthetic problem of the immediate, simultaneous and complex expressive force of ideographic signs in comparison to the arbitrary and linear character of phonetic language. A further aspect involved social criticism, namely the interpretation of the hieroglyphs as the secret script of a priestly caste that used it to stabilize its power.<sup>14</sup> At the same time, however, the efforts to produce a historical and philological interpretation of the hieroglyphs established certain prerequisites for their final deciphering at the beginning of the nineteenth century.<sup>15</sup>

The topicality of semantic questions stood in close connection with the rise of lexicology. On a more practical level, the increasingly detailed description of meanings in dictionaries was an important component of this development. On a theoretical level, the question raised in the Port-Royal *Logic* of the relationship between denotation and connotation was broadened by an extensive treatment of the problem of metaphors. Du Marsais's treatise, *Des tropes ou des différents sens dans lesquels on peut prendre un même mot dans une même langue* of 1730, was the most comprehensive tract on the problem of metaphors, and as such it was devoted to important questions concerning semantics and throughout the eighteenth century it was considered to be the book that had established the author's reputation. The problem of translatability was discussed as an interlingual comparison of meaning. The debate over neology directed attention toward the development of meaning in words since neo-semanticisms were also perceived as linguistic neology.

Etymology was also the object of ongoing interest, both with regard to the origin of the elements of vocabulary as well as to their historical development and their expressive capacity in the history of cultures and ideas. Turgot's extensive article on "Etymologie" in the *Encyclopédie* digested the investigations of numerous predecessors, including those of Leibniz.

I have already mentioned the marked increase in the publication of grammar books. The scale of the different types of grammars ranged from elementary didactic works to those predominantly about linguistic philosophy.<sup>16</sup> The interest in problems of "usage" and linguistic norms was no less directed toward grammar than to lexicography, and often enough toward the criticism of the language of contemporary authors, or intended as a critical commentary of classical works of the seventeenth century. This way of discussing linguistic norms counted among the official occupations of the Académie Française, and, alongside many others, Voltaire was also involved in this process.<sup>17</sup> The modern notion of syntax also arose from the grammatical theories and debates of the eighteenth century.<sup>18</sup>

The categorization of language into a general system of signs, which Locke had performed within the framework of his semiotics, was continued in France as a predominately philosophical enterprise above all by Condillac

and, in Germany, by Lambert. There is, however, a distinctly apologetic cast to Costadau's multi-volume semiotic work entitled *An Historical and Critical Treatise on the Principal Signs we use for the Communication of our Thoughts* (*Traité historique et critique des principaux signes dont nous nous servons pour manifester nos pensées*).

In the following chapters I will sketch the course of the debate on language in Enlightenment France as it touched a series of topics in which linguistic questions became intertwined with expositions of anthropology, conceptions of society, and historical thought.

The unfolding of the sensualistic theory of language from Locke to Condillac illustrates the transition to the recognition of the constitutive role of language in thought, in its origin, its development and in the working of cognitive processes. As a rejection of Descartes's postulate of innate ideas, Locke's *Essay concerning Human Understanding* of 1690 was a sensualistic manifesto that fundamentally influenced the French Enlightenment and dealt extensively with linguistic problems, although its epistemology and basic conception of language still retained rationalistic elements. Condillac, who consciously went beyond Locke, fashioned the cognitive function of language into a supporting pillar of his sensualistic system. His explanation of language and thought as the result of a long mutual development in the history of humanity gave new importance to the problem of the origin of language in that it interpreted language and thought, and thus the intellectual qualities of the individual and the character of society, as the result of a distinctly historical process.

With this central position of language within sensualistic interpretations of humanity, various aspects of language theory were incorporated into the arguments that had grown in intensity since the middle of the eighteenth century; these looked to the materialistic consequences of sensualism when applied to nature and society. The campaign against the *Encyclopédie* was the signal of the anti-Enlightenment struggle against sensualism and sensualistic language theory.

Extended into the realm of the natural sciences, the arguments about the origin of language enriched the contemporary stirrings of the theory of evolution, whose orientation toward language theory was then taken up with practically no alteration within the scientific doctrine of transformation in the twentieth century (see Chapter 11, "Language and Evolutionary thinking.")

In the chapters of Locke's *Essay* entitled "The Abuse of Words" and "Language and Perception," two different aspects of the relationship between language and thought are introduced. On the one hand, there was the long debate over the use of language as an instrument both of deception and of intellectual, and often political, subjugation. On the other hand, there was the discussion of the problem concerning the dependence of thought on language and therewith the problem related to the different formation of ideas according to the specificity of individual languages. This was a discussion that was also precipitated by the sensualistic thesis about the constitutive role

of language in thought, and this is, incidentally, the theoretical source of modern arguments about the “linguistic relativity” of thought as well.

The assumption or rejection of a priori categories of thought and of an unchanging “raison” that is independent of place and time led, however, to opposite assumptions concerning even the foundations of syntax (see Chapter 9 on “Grammar, philosophy and anthropology”). Standing in opposition to the rationalistic postulate of a universal “raison” and innate ideas as the basis of sentence structure was the sensualistic theory of the sensuous and historical experience of humanity; it opposed, in other words, timeless rationalistic criteria to the historical development of thought and grammatical norms. In this connection, the seventeenth-century debate about the role of the sensuous faculty of representation found a theoretical answer in the sensualistic legitimation of metaphor as well as in the perception of variability and sensibility in language use.

The concluding chapter points to the logical consistency with which the rejection of essential arguments in Enlightenment language theory after the French Revolution was incorporated into the program of Restoration ideology.

## 8 From Locke to Condillac: the development of the sensualistic theory of language

After making reference to the two main sources of French Enlightenment materialism, specifically Descartes's physics and Locke's sensualism, Karl Marx described Lockean sensualism and its further development by Condillac as a new stage in the ideology of the rising bourgeoisie:

Metaphysics had become insipid. In the same year in which Malebranche and Arnauld, the last great French metaphysicians of the seventeenth century, died, Helvétius and Condillac were born... Besides the negative refutation of seventeenth-century theology and metaphysics, a positive, anti-metaphysical system was required. A book was needed that would systematize the contemporary mode of life and theoretically substantiate it. Locke's treatise *An Essay on the Origin of Human Understanding* [sic] came across the Channel as if in answer to a call.

The immediate pupil and French interpreter of Locke, Condillac, applied Locke's sensualism against seventeenth-century metaphysics. He proved that the French had rightly condemned it as a mere concoction of the imagination and of theological prejudices. He published a refutation of the systems of Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, and Malebranche.

In his work, *L'essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines*, he developed Locke's ideas and proved that not only the soul, but also the senses, not only the art of making ideas, but also the art of sensuous perception, were matters of experience and habit. Thus the entire development of human beings depended upon education and external circumstances.<sup>1</sup>

### **ON THE STATUS OF LANGUAGE IN LOCKE'S *ESSAY* CONCERNING HUMAN UNDERSTANDING**

Locke worked for over twenty years on the problems contained in his *Essay*.<sup>2</sup> The first draft, which dates from 1671, already treated a few of the linguistic questions that he then developed more fully later. To be sure, in the draft of 1671, Locke described the discussion of various problems

related to language as a “digression” from his actual philosophical concerns.<sup>3</sup>

The *Essay*, which finally appeared in 1690 divided into four “books,” devoted a separate book to language, or more precisely to “words.” Yet here, too, Locke pointed out that only after the fact had he realized the significance of the insights that could be gained from the study of language for his philosophy, so that it was not until the third book that he devoted an individual section to the topic, although it actually would have belonged in an earlier part of the work. In his elaboration of a more comprehensive sensualistic system, Condillac did not neglect to refer to Locke’s confession of his inconsistency in the incorporation of language in his *Essay*. I will thus sketch out above all a few of the questions pertaining to language in Locke’s *Essay* that Condillac seized upon when he elaborated his own sensualistic system, partly to develop them further, partly as a conscious effort to distance himself from Locke.

The first book of Locke’s *Essay* deals with the refutation of innate ideas; the second with the sensory origin of ideas and their classification; the title of the third book reads “On Words;” the fourth, “On Knowledge,” treats the stages and the limits of human knowledge and its methods.

Only after he had assumed his fundamental position against the hypothesis of innate ideas and after he had portrayed his theory of the development of ideas did Locke then turn to the function of words in what became a later major section of his *Essay*. The programmatic refutation of any innate principles of thought in the first book, as well as the explanation of the sensory origin of ideas that follows immediately thereafter, are thus presented without any essential reference to language. Only in the third book did Locke emphasize that even the designations of abstract concepts originally had a sensuous meaning and that the original reference of these words to concrete things was a further indication that all the objects of thought originated in the senses. I will quote liberally from the decisive paragraph since it exhibits how Locke applied his notion of sensualism and the two cognitive forms—namely external experience (“sensation”) and inner experience (“reflection”)—to language, and since it also presupposes the existence of ideas independent of language. Only the communication of ideas requires their signification, he wrote:

It may also lead us a little towards the Original of all our Notions and Knowledge, if we remark, how great a dependance our *Words* have on common sensible *Ideas*; and how those, which are made use of to stand for Actions and Notions quite removed from sense, *have their rise from thence, and from obvious sensible Ideas are transferred to more abstruse significations*, and made to stand for *Ideas* that come not under the cognizance of our senses; *e.g. to Imagine, Apprehend, Comprehend, Adhere, Conceive, Instill, Disgust, Disturbance, Tranquillity*, etc. are all Words taken from the Operations of sensible Things, and applied to

certain Modes of Thinking. *Spirit*, in its primary signification, is Breath; *Angel*, a Messenger: And I doubt not, but if we could trace them to their sources, we should find, in all Languages, the names, which stand for Things that fall not under our Senses, to have had their first rise from sensible *Ideas*. By which we may give some kind of guess, what kind of Notions they were, and whence derived, which filled their Minds, who were the first Beginners of Languages; and how Nature, even in the naming of Things, unawares suggested to Men the Originals and Principles of all their Knowledge: whilst, to give Names, that might make known to others any Operations they felt in themselves, or any other *Ideas*, that came not under their Senses, they were fain to borrow Words from ordinary known *Ideas* of Sensation, by that means to make others the more easily to conceive those Operations they experimented in themselves, which made no outward sensible appearances; and then when they had got known and agreed Names, to signify those internal Operations of their own Minds, they were sufficiently furnished to make known by Words, all their other *Ideas*; since they could consist of nothing, but either of outward sensible Perceptions, or of the inward Operations of their Minds about them; we having, as has been proved, no *Ideas* at all, but what originally come either from sensible Objects without, or what we feel within our selves, from the inward Workings of our own Spirits, which we are conscious to our selves of within.<sup>4</sup>

Locke, in connection with the problem of signification, could refer here so casually to the cognitive forms of internal and external experience because they had served in the previous two books of the *Essay* as arguments against the concept of innate ideas.

With the two sources of knowledge, namely “Sensation” and “Reflection,” Locke established the origin of all ideas as being derived from experience, that is either immediately from sense impressions occasioned by the material world, or from the intellectual processing of the ideas supplied through the senses. Reflection brings forth a new stage of ideas that cannot originate immediately from sense perception (thinking, willing, etc.). Locke’s supposition that reflection exists from the very beginning alongside of sense activity and is itself an inward cognitive activity, corresponds to his belief in the Biblical account of the origin of language origin: God placed human beings in the world as social creatures that were, as such, capable of language.<sup>5</sup>

It has been said often enough, and we will return to this problem later, that Locke’s supposition that two cognitive forms are present in human beings from the very beginning represents a dualistic relic within his sensualistic system. Nevertheless, based on the notion of a sensory origin of all ideas Locke developed the hypothesis that thinking itself could be a quality of the body, and that the soul might thus possibly be of a material nature. But, he claimed, this cannot be viewed as an argument against the

immortality of the soul. Yet, despite his assurances to the contrary, Locke's hypothesis of the possibility of the materiality of the soul repeatedly prompted others to accuse him of advocating materialism.

It is a consequence of the sensualistic formulation of the problem that Locke rejected the rationalistic characterization of animals as mere automatons. He admitted, rather, that animals possessed sensibility and rudimentary forms of cognition. In certain situations a few animals even have the capacity of intellectual deduction, yet these cognitive operations only apply to particular ideas that correspond to a specific sense perception. Only human beings are provided with the capacity of abstraction and the formation of general ideas that are expressed by the words of human language.

Like Descartes, but now under completely different premises, Locke saw in articulated phonetic language the external criterion for measuring the distance between humans and beasts. Whereas Descartes viewed the absence of a communicative form in animals that was comparable to human language as proof of their automatism, Locke interpreted this as a merely gradual difference. Humans and animals demonstrate psychic activities that develop on the basis of sense perception. Yet only with humans do these reach such a level of abstraction that they become expressed in words.

In his investigation of words, Locke thus presupposed that ideas possessed independent existence. Since they are invisible—Locke circumvented the rationalistic conception of the incorporeal character of thought with this term—ideas have to be made available for sensuous perception through verbal communication. Locke thus summarized the three main tasks of language in the following way: 1. the communication of our ideas, 2. the most simple and rapid fulfillment of this communicative function, 3. the knowledge of things that is delivered to the mind in this manner.<sup>6</sup> Elsewhere Locke then added the use of words as notations or signs in the cognitive process and as an instrument of knowledge.

Any kind of word can fulfill the simple function of being a mark of thought, since linguistic signs are already arbitrary, so that their choice is left to the discretion of the individual—as documents, as it were, of his or her own thought. In the communication of thoughts, however, the social norm makes a particular choice of words compulsory. In addition, there is both the “civil” and “philosophical” use of words. The first guarantees coexistence in human society, while the second must aim to express the truth of things. It is possible that Locke intended to expand on the distinction that had been made in the Port-Royal *Logic* between the truth of the “usage” and the truth of “choses.”

As designations of general ideas, words make the necessary economy of linguistic communication possible. If there were only designations for the ideas of the singular and particular, then the immense number of words that would thereby result would not allow any real communication to take place.

Locke thought that the positive role of linguistic signs was encumbered,

however, by grave defects. In the first draft of his *Essay*, Locke had already dealt with the imperfection of words. This critical orientation was then expanded in detail in the published version of two decades later. A chapter was therefore devoted to both the “imperfection” and the “abuse” of words. Imperfections are unavoidable natural defects of language; abuse is the negligent or even consciously misleading use of words. These defects are all the more disruptive in that language, the great connecting link of society, is also the instrument by which all new knowledge is transmitted to each generation. Thus the imperfection and abuse of words could potentially create an unbreakable chain of errors. Locke therefore wondered whether language really served truth more than it stood in its way.<sup>7</sup>

In an extreme case, the abuse of words can even serve to eliminate human rights.<sup>8</sup> Locke made a similar criticism with respect to the hypothesis of innate ideas, since, with their aid, it was possible to declare the interests of the ruling powers as being given by nature in order to exclude the possibility of reflecting on their validity.<sup>9</sup>

In his characterization of indefinite or false meanings of words as a source of confusion and error, Locke went so far as to describe language as an instrument of cognition—which apparently stands in contradiction to his assumption that ideas existed independently of language—whose defects hang a veil of fog before the understanding and distort the truth, so that it is as if truth were viewed through an imperfect medium.<sup>10</sup> This critique of language did not, however, go beyond the notion that the function of words was to serve as marks for ideas, without granting signs a constitutive role in cognition.

One pressing task in the search for truth thus consisted in distinguishing between our apprehension of words and our recognition of things, in order to advance to the knowledge of things independently of words. On the basis of this phrase, one could assume that there was general agreement between Locke and the Port-Royal *Logic*, which described the danger of orienting thought to words rather than to things, especially since a certain parallel exists between the differentiation of nominal and real definitions in the Port-Royal *Logic*<sup>11</sup> and in Locke’s differentiation between nominal and real essences.<sup>12</sup> Yet the main emphasis of the critique is different, in so far as the authors of Port-Royal were interested in the discrepancy between the physical nature of the linguistic sign and the incorporeal idea, whereas Locke was concerned to warn of the danger that the abstractions fixed in the meanings of words would distract us from the real knowledge to be had by perceiving the world of objects.

This danger is especially great, in Locke’s view, during childhood, and its effect is all the more disastrous when the acquisition of language is oriented toward the knowledge of words without the simultaneous knowledge of things—a concern that he also shared with Descartes. Locke and Descartes also agreed in their criticism of scholastic scientific jargon as a form of language abuse. In a more extensive fashion than Descartes, Locke ironized

the use of pompous words and their empty or confused meaning, just as, in general, he felt that the disputes in traditional science contributed more to the entanglement of meanings of words than to the knowledge of things.<sup>13</sup>

In the previous chapter I pointed out that in the French advance copy of Locke's principal work the metaphorical use of words counted among the abuses of language. The *Essay* and its French translation retained this opinion, both of which declared the appeal to the affects in the communication of truth to be dangerous. Opponents of the imagination in the debate described above thus believed that they had a confederate in Locke. On the other hand, soon thereafter Du Bos's sensualistic aesthetics derived the legitimacy of metaphorical expression from the assumption of sense activity as the source of ideas.

The emphasis on sense activity as the foundation of meaning in all words may seem to suggest that Locke's condemnation of the metaphorical use of signification was limited to the rejection of arbitrariness in word choice. However, his judgment of rhetoric remained purely formal, for, according to Locke, the typical freedoms of metaphorical expression and the appeal to the affects open the way for an arbitrariness that, given the suggestive power of words, would give humanity false notions. In the transmission of truth one should therefore have only teaching in mind, not pleasing, and one should therefore do away altogether with rhetorical devices.<sup>14</sup>

We see how Locke was influenced here by the slogans from the debate concerning the role of the affects in language while at the same time he accorded no positive role to emotional effect in the transmission of truth, and thus in this respect he stood closer to the rationalistic conception of language than did, for example, Bernard Lamy. The opposition of Locke's judgment to Du Bos's theory of emotional persuasion lessens somewhat when we consider that Locke allowed emotional means of persuasion in a style that was not concerned with instructing the faculty of judgment, and, on the other hand, that Du Bos viewed style alone as being of primary importance for poetry, and instruction as secondary.

Locke's attack on rhetoric is thus hardly tempered in its severity, so that his French translator, Pierre Coste, accused him of not having distinguished between the artistic tricks of a deceptive declamatory style and the rules of true rhetoric.<sup>15</sup> As a foil to Locke, he cited Fénelon as an authority for the latter consideration, and we have seen that Fénelon was a committed advocate of a positive role for the sensuous faculty of representation.

Locke's dismissal of the metaphorical use of words is symptomatic of the fact that his critique of language took a direction that did not lead to a sensualistic aesthetics. But Du Bos and Condillac then very consciously took this step. Du Marsais's treatise, *Des tropes ou des différents sens dans lesquels on peut prendre un même mot dans une même langue* of 1730, also rests on the sensualistic rehabilitation of sensory cognition from which Locke himself had apparently not derived any consequences for language use or for the foundations of aesthetic judgment.

Following Locke's portrayal of the imperfection and abuse of words is a chapter that refers to the ways in which these defects can be limited: "Of the Remedies of the foregoing Imperfections and Abuses."<sup>16</sup> Since Locke did not delude himself that he could reform language from the ground up, he merely showed the ways in which the imperfections and abuse of language might be remedied, and he established to this purpose a catalogue of rules. First he demanded that in speaking one give each word a meaning by associating a real idea with it. He then later often repeated this rule and gave inspiration to a form of language criticism that described words as empty of meaning ("vide de sens"), in order to designate the misuse of words. Locke further stipulated that the ideas associated with words had to be, while respecting their complexity, as clear and exact as possible. One has to observe the way linguistic usage fixes word use; this requires that one refrain from willfully idiosyncratic terms. If the expression of new ideas demands the creation of new words or the use of already existent words with a new meaning attached to them, one must, he wrote, expressly refer to this new meaning. In the case of simple ideas, this occurs by listing synonyms or by simply referring to the matter in question. Complex ideas, however, must be explained by a definition.

In the following fourth book of his *Essay*, Locke treated the stages, extent, and organization of knowledge. And in the last chapter of this book, that is at the very end of the entire work, while giving a brief division of the sciences Locke once again returned to the function of words, which now obviously received a more important role than in the previous parts of the *Essay*.

Here Locke recommended that one divide the sciences into three subject-areas: 1. the nature of things and their relations to one another, 2. the correct ways of behavior in humans, understood as beings who possess reason and a will, 3. the means by which knowledge within these first two divisions is attained and communicated.

The knowledge of these means, however, is the doctrine of signs, and this means, above all, words. Because of the extraordinary importance of the text, I quote Locke's characterization of the "Doctrine of signs" in full:

*Thirdly*, The Third Branch may be called "simeiotiki," or *the Doctrine of Signs*, the most usual whereof being Words, it is aptly enough termed also "logiki," Logick; the business whereof, is to consider the Nature of Signs, the Mind makes use of for the understanding of Things, or conveying its Knowledge to others. For since the Things, the Mind contemplates, are none of them, besides it self, present to the Understanding, 'tis necessary that something else, as a Sign or Representation of the thing it considers, should be present to it: And these are *Ideas*. And because the Scene of *Ideas* that makes one Man's Thoughts, cannot be laid open to the immediate view of another, nor laid up any where but in the Memory, a no very sure Repository: Therefore to communicate our Thoughts to one

another, as well as record them for our own use, Signs of our *Ideas* are also necessary. Those which Men have found most convenient, and therefore generally make use of, are articulate Sounds. The Consideration then of *Ideas* and *Words*, as the great Instruments of Knowledge, makes no despicable part of their Contemplation, who would take a view of humane Knowledge in the whole Extent of it. And, perhaps, if they were distinctly weighed, and duly considered, they would afford us another sort of Logick and Critick, than what we have been hitherto acquainted with.<sup>17</sup>

Locke thus saw in this brief justification of a “semiotics,” or “doctrine of signs,” ideas as signs of things in the cognitive process and, in the same connection, words as the necessary signs of ideas. In this way, Locke emphasized the necessary and positive role of words in cognition at the very end of his *Essay*. Did it occur in the process of revising the *Essay* that Locke gained increasing insight into the simultaneously communicative and cognitive role of language? After all, Locke himself pointed out that he became conscious of the significance of “words” for his philosophical concerns too late to consider them in a truly appropriate manner.

To be sure, Locke’s chapter on the imperfection and abuse of words stressed the danger of misleading thought with language, and this gave rise to his demand that one seek knowledge of things independently of words. Yet, Locke’s critique of language is at the same time a critique of epistemology and method. For this reason, his suggestions concerning the ways to remedy the imperfections and abuse of words can already be seen as a transition to the consideration of their necessary function for cognition.

In any case, Locke’s *Essay* closes with a call for a “doctrine of signs,” from which he expected new insights into the laws and processes of thought.

## **CONDILLAC AND THE FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF LOCKE’S SENSUALISM**

### **Sign theory and sensualistic philosophy: the “*Essai sur l’origine des connaissances humaines*”**

In 1688, two years before Locke’s *Essay concerning Human Understanding* appeared, an advance copy of an early draft was, as we have seen, published in French.<sup>18</sup> And after the complete French translation of the *Essay* came out in 1700, several reprints bore witness to the contemporary importance of this sensualistic manifesto for France.

I have already indicated that even Cartesians such as Pierre Bayle thereafter viewed Descartes’s hypothesis of innate ideas as having been refuted. Fontenelle’s empirical interpretation of Cartesianism had also already previously moved to a sensualistic position.

Whereas Locke’s philosophy provided a theory of experience, Newton had, more or less at the same time, used the equivalent method of

experimental science to make a substantial contribution to the creation of a new view of the physical world. Voltaire, who devoted his talents to the propagation of sensualism and of experimental science, became an effective French propagandist for both Locke and Newton. His *Lettres philosophiques sur les Anglais* of 1734 (usually cited as the *Lettres philosophiques*) even brought him into danger of being arrested.

Condillac's sensualistic system realized the demand Locke had made but never fulfilled of establishing the doctrine of signs as the foundation of epistemology. By proposing a sensualistic theory of signs, at whose center stood language as the essential component of a sensualistic cognitive theory, Condillac went beyond the sensualistic system set forth in Locke's *Essay*. Through the consistent inclusion of a sensualistic notion of the sign, Condillac was able to remove the rationalistic relic that remained in Locke's philosophy in the form of an a priori capacity of thought, and he took sensualism to the logical conclusion that all faculties of cognition arose from sensation. Leibniz, with regard to Locke's dualism, had added to the traditional sensualistic phrase, "nihil est in intellectu quod non prius fuerit in sensu," the telling complement: "nisi intellectus ipse." With Condillac's rigorous sensualism, understanding itself was traced back to the further development of sense impressions.

The precondition for this new explanation of the human capacity of cognition was the opening of an historical-genetic perspective that lay outside Locke's purview and in which Condillac placed the common origin and mutual development of thought and language. A further new aspect with regard to Locke resulted from this hypothesis, namely Condillac's assumption of a constitutive role of language in cognition that went considerably beyond Locke's comments on the function of language as an instrument of thought.

Finally, a completely new aspect of Condillac's sensualism was that, on the basis of his sign theory, he also speculated about the possibility of a sensualistic aesthetics. With that, he continued to use Locke's sensualism to elaborate a sensualistic aesthetics with which, in France, Du Bos in particular had already been concerned.

The following works of Condillac are the most important for my purposes here: the *Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines* of 1746, the *Traité des systèmes* of 1749, the *Traité des animaux* of 1755; the *Grammaire*, the *Art d'écrire*, and the *Art de penser*, which were written during the years surrounding 1760 as part of a course of study for the Prince of Parma, for whom Condillac was engaged as a teacher from 1758 to 1767. At the end of his life, he also published a *Logique, ou les premiers développements de l'art de penser*, which, as well as his posthumously published *Langue des calculs*,<sup>19</sup> included various important ideas related to language theory.

In the chapter that now follows, I will refer to the significance of sign theory for Condillac's sensualism, especially in the *Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines*. Several of the specific questions Condillac

entertained, such as word order, the origin of language, the concept of evolution, the “abuse of words,” and the relationship between language and thought, will be treated in greater detail in later chapters, in which I will discuss the development of each respective problem from the seventeenth to the eighteenth centuries.

Condillac had already provided the most comprehensive portrayal of his philosophical system in the *Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines*, while his later writings explore in greater depth individual components and conclusions of his philosophy.

A work that was very commendable for its time, the *History of French Literature in the Eighteenth Century* by Hermann Hettner, which appeared in 1860, portrayed Condillac's *Essai* merely as a reproduction of Locke's basic views and maintained that it was not until Condillac's later works that he distanced himself from Locke and produced the further development of his sensualism—a misleading opinion that has often been repeated. Condillac did indeed speak on the first pages of his *Essai* of sensation and reflection as the source of our ideas, and he thus seemed to adopt the same position as Locke. But he was referring here to the condition of human beings who have already completed the formation of their cognitive capacities, whose sensory origin he then expressly declared to be the main subject of the *Essai*, which was thus in direct opposition to Locke.

Thus, in this work, Condillac had already done away with the dualism of sensation and reflection that was still present in Locke's philosophy, and he then later coined the apt phrase that reflection was “sensation which has been further developed and transformed” (“la sensation transformée”).

In a like manner, Condillac's *Essai* granted to signs and language a major role in the higher development of sensation. It demonstrates at length the necessity of signs and particularly of language for the origin, development and functioning of thought.

It is true that Locke had also given language an important place in his work, and Condillac claimed that Locke was the first to have written about language as a true philosopher. At the same time, however, he emphasized Locke's own statement that in the course of his work on human understanding he only belatedly came on the necessity of considering the role of language. Instead of revising the entire work, Locke portrayed the development of ideas and the use of words in different parts of his work. With that, Condillac held, Locke prevented himself from perceiving the interdependence of ideas and signs.<sup>20</sup>

In Condillac's view, only with the aid of signs could the different stages of cognitive operations gradually develop from the original sense impression in a process by which thoughts and signs were interdependent. For it was only through signs that the contents of the mind could be fixed and combined. The fundamental principle of the fixing and combination of ideas, and hence of the development of thought, is what Condillac called the “connection of ideas” (“la liaison des idées”). The subtitle that Condillac had

given to the first edition of his *Essai* refers to this “connection of ideas”: *A Work that reduces everything concerning the Understanding to a single principle.*

The theory of the connection of ideas had already been proposed by others before Condillac. He could thus dispense with a detailed description of its physiological bases. Proceeding from Descartes’s psychophysiology, such well-known authors as Cordemoy and Bernard Lamy had already pointed out the connection of the impressions delivered to the brain, and they had explained the meanings of words as the combination of the impression of certain series of sounds with the impression of certain ideas.

Condillac’s concept of the “liaison des idées” includes the combination of signs and ideas as well as the connection of ideas with one another, which itself occurs by connecting their respective signs. The constitutive function of language in thought thus grants to language an entirely different role than had been the case in rationalistic theory, in which the linguistic sign stood as a supplementary instrument consciously created in order to communicate the thoughts that existed independently of language.

In Condillac’s theory, we do not consciously create linguistic signs, but they gradually develop in the process of mutual interchange with thought. He thus placed the origin of language and thought in a phylogenetic perspective, whereas Locke’s explanation of the sensuous origin of ideas and his arguments about the relationship between language and thought had remained confined to an ontogenetic point of view.

The first spontaneous gestures and cries—Condillac called them “the language of action” (“langage d’action”)—made the fixing and communication of cognitive contents, which initially had referred to the immediate needs of life, possible for the first time in the history of humanity.<sup>21</sup> After this beginning stage of gestures and cries, there then arose the first articulated phonetic signs. In a further process of mutual development of cognitive processes and signs, the origin of spoken language and finally the transition to the general use of articulated phonetic language ran parallel to the use of gestural language. However, in Condillac’s view, spoken language retains the play of gestures and facial expressions as relics of the original language of action, which consisted only of gestures and unarticulated sounds. The dialectical horizon of this hypothesis is remarkable in that it describes the co-operation of the language of action and speech: the articulated phonetic language arose out of the phonetic elements of the language of action in a natural development, but it had to establish its full development in opposition to the language of gestures. (This hypothesis is strengthened by observations of present-day Bushmen languages, in which the understanding of the spoken language largely demands the simultaneous perception of gestures.)<sup>22</sup>

A similar dialectical perspective is apparent in Condillac’s *Essai*, namely in its hypothesis of the intertwining of needs, social communication, and the mutual development of language and thought.<sup>23</sup> It was only in this

framework that the explanation of thought as “sensation transformée” can be justified with the aid of a constitutive role of signs and language.

It followed logically that Condillac’s sensualism opposed that rationalistic interpretation which had attracted the attention of the seventeenth-century thinkers who participated in the debates about language, whether they concerned the imagination, the intellectual and communicative capacities of animals, the relationship between language and cognition, or a purely grammatical problem such as the foundations of word order. In every case, these philosophers proceeded from the postulate that there was a sensory origin of thought and rejected the hypothesis of innate ideas. According to Condillac, Locke had devoted too much time to the refutation of this error of the Cartesians; he himself, in his *Essai sur l’origine des connaissances humaines*, would banish innate ideas from the world in an “indirect fashion.”<sup>24</sup>

Of course, Condillac also approached this problem directly, as for example when he mentioned the scholastic controversy about universals, in which the so-called “realists” held general concepts to be real beings, whereas the “nominalists” wanted to see general concepts as mere names. Condillac naturally felt an affinity with the nominalist position, and one occasionally finds him claiming that general concepts are nothing more than words. Yet in his analysis of the process of abstraction, he emphasized that general concepts are an intellectual generalization of qualities actually present in objects. He criticized the advocates of innate ideas, as well as all successors to the medieval “realists,” by saying that they granted to the products of human thought an a priori character by declaring that the concepts that resulted from the process of abstraction possessed an actual, independent existence. Condillac’s objections to the innate character of general concepts are crystallized in the statement that the same organs of sense, the same cognitive operations and the same circumstances must of necessity result in the same effects.<sup>25</sup>

With this phrase, Condillac was not claiming that the intellectual registering of the external world is a merely mechanical operation. In Condillac’s view, it is rather the case that the respective needs of human beings, and their opinions, make themselves felt. These sorts of needs and interests were at all times an important stimulating factor in the development of thought and language. He thus identified needs, knowledge, and language as parts of a process of constant interaction and development. Condillac saw these factors in specifically social contexts when he pointed out that “human intercourse,” that is social communication, was the basis and the most important source of knowledge.<sup>26</sup> At the very beginning, then, he formulated the notion that reflection aided by language was not simply a mechanical reproduction, and even possessed an important social component. Condillac then referred in detail to the fact that the peculiarities of a people’s character that were mainly determined by historical factors enter into its language, and then contribute to the preservation of the specific views of a people.<sup>27</sup>

Differences in thought also result from the various ways in which signs, seen as the foundation of cognition, are employed. The different stages in the development of languages bring about different degrees in the perfection of thought. In addition, individuals differ from one another in the degree to which they understand how to use linguistic signs as the vehicles of thought. Descartes's famous dictum that the understanding of all humans is identical, but that all humans did not command to the same degree the method by which they used the understanding, is thus applied by Condillac to the use of language as the analytic method of cognition.

In order to understand this thesis, as well as Condillac's often cited maxim that a perfect science is a perfect language, one must consider what he meant here by language. Just as he understood by real ideas only precisely determined cognitive contents, so too he viewed language only as the combination of precisely determined cognitive contents with an equally precise system of signs.

It is with an awareness of this stipulation that one must understand Condillac's remark that there are more words in the memory than ideas,<sup>28</sup> a claim that apparently stands in conflict with the fact that most words have several different meanings, which Locke had explained by saying that there could not be as many words as there are different ideas. Condillac was of the opinion that in so far as there are more words than thoughts, words are all too often used thoughtlessly, so that only vague ideas, or none at all, are combined with them. To have vague ideas, however, means for Condillac not having any ideas at all.

With that, Condillac expressed a central notion of his sensualistic critique of language. In a like measure to the imagination, language is absolutely necessary to thought, but also similarly to the imagination, its use can produce the best or the most ruinous effects, according to the way in which people know how to use it.<sup>29</sup>

The imagination is thus a crucial concept in Condillac's philosophy. I have already referred in detail to the important status of the imagination in the seventeenth-century debates concerning the relationship between body and soul. For the eighteenth century, this concept was just as important in the discussions concerning aesthetics, psychology, and language theory as it was for epistemology.

The imagination, understood as the faculty of renewing sense impressions already received in the absence of the objects from which they arose, essentially enabled, in Condillac's view, the formation of memory and of all the other cognitive processes that are based on it. Condillac assumed that both humans and beasts possessed the foundations of these cognitive forms. However, with the aid of signs, we have developed higher cognitive forms from the imagination itself. We can thus employ the understanding to direct the imagination, a role that in rationalistic conceptions was granted to "pure" thought alone, or to cognition that was independent of the body. But without the direction supplied by the superior cognitive apparatus, the imagination

posed, as Condillac also believed, a great danger. An undisciplined imagination is the source of that particular form of madness which he explained as the undisciplined association of ideas deviating from all norms. Without the imagination, however, no thought is possible at all, and Condillac saw the most fortuitous intellectual disposition as one in which there is an equilibrium between the imagination and abstract cognitive forms.<sup>30</sup>

Language, like the imagination, is also at the same time the precondition for thought as well as a source of its misdirection. If language is that which makes thought possible in the first place in that it provides signs for the fixing and manipulation of ideas, then there are also, alongside of the potential incalculable gain, two primary dangers that Condillac summarized, with reference to Locke, as the "abuse of language." The routine of language use can lead to the situation in which one only repeats signs without associating real ideas with them. In addition, false notions that do not correspond to reality can be combined with linguistic signs that might lead to completely imaginary ideas. The correct method of thought and the correct use of language thus form an indivisible unity.

The signs that first make thought possible also contain the danger of orienting cognition too exclusively toward signs and thus of emptying it of real thoughts. For real thoughts can be the result only of analysis, and analysis meant for Condillac bringing into consciousness the origin of these thoughts in connection with their linguistic determination. We must therefore repeatedly turn to the analysis of the objective world and the ideas we speak about, and we must precisely determine our ideas, that is supply them with unequivocal signs. In so doing, although one must begin with existing linguistic usage, the correction and renewal of language remain the necessary condition for correct thinking. By this Condillac meant both the new determination of the meaning of traditional words and the empowerment to form new designations for new ideas. He thus took a stance with regard to the controversial problem of the lexical development of language that had been thematized as "neology". Just as his predecessors had done in the debate concerning the abuse of words, Condillac began from the standpoint that language can serve the unconscious, but also the conscious, misdirection of thought in social communication.<sup>31</sup>

The sensualistic hypothesis of the origin of language and thought also led Condillac to considerations of the often-debated arbitrary character of the linguistic sign in connection with the equally traditional division of signs into natural signs and conventional, institutional or arbitrary signs. In this division, Condillac like other authors before him, saw the natural signs of the "language of action" (spontaneous cries or gestures) as an immediate reaction to a sense impression. In this way they have the same character as the spontaneous phonetic expressions, or motions, of animals. Condillac also thought that institutional signs resulted from a long process growing out of

the original use of natural signs. It is precisely owing to their institutional character that articulated linguistic signs mark most clearly the boundary between human thought and the merely instinctive use of signs and instinctive behavior. They represent the stage of sign development that differentiates humans from beasts, but this stage resulted from those originally natural signs in the same way as thought was the product of “sensation transformée.”

The use of institutional signs makes human beings the masters of their imagination—a cognitive form that is otherwise common to both humans and animals—and enables them to raise themselves above the merely spontaneous reaction to sense impressions. Here is the origin of the faculty of human memory. Only the conscious recollection of sense impressions of absent objects with the aid of signs marking these sense impressions makes the formation of the memory possible, as well as the cognitive operations that rest on it.<sup>32</sup> The control human beings have over their imagination thanks to signs and their association is also the constant source for new combinations of ideas and for the formation of new ideas. This is a further indication of the function of language in creative thought.

Condillac was the first to have erected a coherent sensualistic theory of the origin of cognitive processes. With the aid of his conception of the use of signs and the association of ideas he constructed a line of development beginning with sense impressions through the cognitive forms of perception, attention, imagination and memory to the operations of differentiating, generalizing, comparing, judging and deducing. The use of signs creates a bridge between the processes of sensation and cognition.

The thesis of the constitutive role of the sign in thought supported the sensualistic view of the relationship between experience and understanding, and it thus enlarged upon Locke’s theoretical understanding of the relationship between sense activity, feeling, and the understanding. It was on this basis, then, that Condillac’s *Essai* treats aesthetic issues.<sup>33</sup>

Here, too, we are concerned with questions that caught Condillac’s attention as a result of the central position of the sign in his philosophy. Thus, in addition to language, he included other sign systems employed to mark sensations and thoughts in his epistemological treatise, extending from gestures to painting, and other arts such as dance and pantomime, all the way to music, in order to verify his sensualistic theory regarding the aesthetic realm.<sup>34</sup> When Condillac repeatedly referred back to Du Bos in his discussion of various problems of poetry, pantomime, and music, he was aware that Locke’s philosophy had also stimulated a reconsideration of the field of aesthetics. Soon thereafter, Diderot, in his *Lettre sur les sourds et muets*, similarly went from problems of epistemology, language origin and the relationship between language and thought to aesthetic questions, while his article in the *Encyclopédie* on “The Beautiful” is supported by the epistemological premises of sensualism.

Finally, Condillac also drew pedagogic conclusions from his conception of the mutual determination of language and thought. A preponderant emphasis on filling the memory, as it was practiced in traditional methods of education, amounts to the rote learning of signs with which no real thoughts are combined. To counter this, Condillac felt that the process of education must also continuously follow the method of analysis and, by building upon sense perception, develop the imagination and the cognitive forms that arise from it in order to connect precisely determined ideas with just as precise linguistic signs.<sup>35</sup>

Marx, in his discussion of Condillac (above, p. 70) was certainly not the first to have pointed out the fact that sensualism was an important theoretical source of the materialism of the Enlightenment. This conclusion had already been reached often enough during the eighteenth century, and then it was usually expressed as an orthodox reproach. Indeed, Condillac's sensualistic system—apart from the question of whether this was his own view or not—had, to a greater degree than Locke's philosophy, paved the way for a materialist explanation of thought.

If sensualistic philosophy was a source of philosophical materialism, then one must add however that the lines of development that arose from sensualism are completely different and in some cases even radically opposed to one another. Lenin, in his characterization of Berkeley and Hume as the theoretical sources of empirico-critical philosophy, pointed out the two opposed conclusions that were drawn from the sensualistic principle that all knowledge stems from sense impressions. The denial of objective reality as the source of sensations or the rejection of our ability to know reality leads to the different varieties of idealism. The recognition of objective reality and its recognizability leads, however, from the sensualistic point of departure to materialism.<sup>36</sup> In the same passage Lenin quotes the challenge Diderot made to Condillac to refute Berkeley, whose system Diderot characterized in the following manner:

Those philosophers are called idealists who recognize only their own existence and the existence of the sensations that take place in themselves, and nothing more...and to the disgrace of the human mind and of philosophy, this system is the most difficult to refute, although it is the most absurd.<sup>37</sup>

This is a passage from Diderot's *Lettre sur les aveugles*, in which he was referring to Condillac's *Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines*, which had appeared three years earlier. He challenges Condillac to refute Berkeley precisely because the basic premise of sensualism is shared by both philosophers and because at the beginning of Condillac's *Essai* one finds statements that seemingly agree with Berkeley. Diderot thus quotes Condillac's comment at the beginning of the first chapter—that we perceive our thoughts only within ourselves—but then he continues with the remark

that because of the partial similarity of their statements it would be extremely interesting to witness an exchange between two opponents such as Condillac and Berkeley.<sup>38</sup>

Diderot could designate Condillac as an opponent of Berkeley because in other parts of the *Essai* there was a sufficient number of remarks referring to the recognition of an objective external world as the source of sense impressions. Condillac's repeated reference to the imperfection of human knowledge cannot be interpreted as agnosticism since the main concern of the *Essai* is the perfection of cognition, rather than the issue of perception directed toward the external world. Yet Diderot's remark had pointed out the lack of a logically sound difference from Berkeley, so that in his *Traité des sensations* Condillac then elaborated more systematically the problem of perceiving an external, objective world.

But it is precisely in the realm that is the most important in the present context, namely that of the role of language in thought, that the difference between Condillac and Berkeley was evident from the beginning. Characteristically, Berkeley himself, as Condillac would then later also do, had already reproached Locke for not having begun his explanation of human thought with the analysis of words, and instead treating this subject only in the third book of his *Essay*. Yet the conclusions he made with regard to this fault are diametrically opposed in Condillac and Berkeley.

Berkeley criticized Locke because, in spite of his detailed discussion of the imperfection and abuse of words, he still accorded to language a positive role in communication and cognition. Berkeley doubted whether in many cases it was even possible to combine a real idea with a word in communication; this was a demand Locke had made and which Condillac had expressed even more emphatically. And with respect to the relationship between language and thought, Berkeley went so far as to accuse Locke of having counted the use of words as marks of thoughts as being among the uses instead of the abuses of language. For, according to Berkeley, language is the greatest obstacle to knowledge. Words arouse, for example, the appearance of the existence of general ideas that in reality cannot possibly exist. For Berkeley's subjective idealism, therefore, epistemological skepticism correlates with a linguistic skepticism that still views Locke's critique of language as having been far too moderate.<sup>39</sup>

As I have already shown, Condillac, on the other hand, had systematically elaborated Locke's suggestions concerning a constructive function of language within thought and he made this the central supporting pillar of his sensualism. If he emphatically indicated the danger of language misleading thought, then this is precisely what underscores his demand that one make language into an instrument of true knowledge. In this respect as well, Diderot regarded Condillac not without reason as one of his allies in his opposition to the idealism of Berkeley.

Diderot's sensualism, like Condillac's, was a philosophical expression of

the world-view and the scientific ideal of the rising eighteenth-century bourgeoisie. In this context, the significance and influence of Condillac's philosophy lay in the impetus and orientation it gave to scientific thought. Numerous individual ideas of his must, however, nonetheless appear questionable to us today.

Even Condillac himself did not always observe the principles of experimental science. Occasionally he merely replaced the rationalistic hypothesis with a sensualistic one, or a rationalistic speculation with a sensualistic one. In several cases, what Condillac also called an experiment was merely an abstract construct based on the sensualistic perspective, as for example when he hypothesized what would occur if human beings could communicate and use certain senses under particular historical circumstances. Condillac also proceeds from a similar hypothesis in his *Traité des sensations*, when he provides a detailed description of the hypothetical stages in which a statue that has been given a human organism and sense perceptions develops intellectual faculties. But the mere fact that he elaborated this hypothesis, of which there were precedents before Condillac's treatise, was also a step in the further development of sensualistic theory.

Within the context of the historical circumstances from which it arose and in which it became effective, the significance of Condillac's philosophy was considerable. His disinclination to appear in public and his avoidance of controversy, however, makes it difficult to determine his immediate influence. Thus, despite his initially close contacts with Diderot, he never participated directly in the *Encyclopédie* project, and yet in important sections of it one clearly finds his influence, and even excerpts from his writings. The leading authors of the encyclopedia stood firmly on the side of sensualism, beginning with the two editors, Diderot and d'Alembert. Approximately one quarter of Diderot's extensive article "Encyclopédie" (vol. 5) consists of a treatise on language, and d'Alembert already referred to Condillac in his famous preface to the first volume ("Discours préliminaire des éditeurs").

It was extraordinary that three such important representatives of the Enlightenment as Condillac, Rousseau, and Diderot, all of whom were barely thirty and still virtually completely unknown, formed a kind of friendly alliance at the end of the 1740s. By 1744, Condillac was acquainted with Diderot through Rousseau. And thanks to Diderot, Condillac found a publisher for his *Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines*, which appeared two years later. In the same year, Diderot's *Pensées philosophiques* were published, and were subsequently condemned and burned. One could name an entire series of ideas from Condillac's *Essai* that appear in Diderot's later writings. Three years after the *Essai*, Diderot's *Lettre sur les aveugles* appeared, in which he proposed that the knowledge delivered to the mind through the sense of touch was vital, since for the blind, the sense of touch must take the place of the eyes. This

work earned for Diderot the reproach of atheism and several months in jail. (By reporting on a deaf-mute who had for years habitually participated in religious ceremonies without having the least idea of the existence of God, Condillac had also touched on a very sensitive subject in his *Essai*. But Condillac mentioned it as an unsuspecting quotation from a publication of the Academy of Sciences.)<sup>40</sup> In 1751, the same year as the first volume of the *Encyclopédie* was published, Diderot's *Lettre sur les sourds et muets* appeared, whose continuation of Condillac's ideas I have already mentioned.

In his *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes* of 1755, Rousseau referred to Condillac and radicalized his hypothesis of the mutual development of language and thought by pushing it in the direction of social criticism. In his novel on education, *Emile* (published in 1762 and burned by court order), there are numerous suggestions of Condillac's philosophy and its pedagogical consequences.

In 1756 Condillac received a letter from Voltaire containing a flattering invitation to his Swiss estate. Voltaire proposed to Condillac that he consolidate the substance of his previously published works, beginning with the *Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines*, into a single unified work; Voltaire wished to offer him the best working conditions for the project since he felt that the interests of the Enlightenment required such a book.<sup>41</sup> I will return to the reasons why it seemed inadvisable to Condillac to accept Voltaire's invitation to edit and publish a new, comprehensive portrayal of his sensualistic philosophy.

Condillac's influence on scientific thought extended to linguistics and psychology and even to chemistry. As president of the Berlin Academy of Sciences, the French philosopher, mathematician, and biologist Pierre Louis de Maupertuis, arranged for Condillac's admission into the Academy and soon thereafter Maupertuis gave lectures on topics relating to language philosophy that had been suggested by Condillac's work. This promotion certainly contributed to the development of interest in linguistics in one of the most important institutions in German-speaking countries. In 1757, a lecture was held at the Berlin Academy that juxtaposed Condillac and Leibniz with respect to their psychological theories;<sup>42</sup> even into the nineteenth century Condillac influenced the development of psychology.<sup>43</sup> In the area of chemistry, Lavoisier was led in his elaboration of modern nomenclature—a decisive step for modern chemistry—by Condillac's theses on the connection between scientific thought and language or sign systems.<sup>44</sup> Thus for Condillac, the development of the mathematical language of signs was simultaneously the expression and instrument of mathematical thought, since only articulated phonetic language or other adequate sign systems made the creative combination of thoughts possible. The new chemical nomenclature primarily created by Lavoisier exemplified Condillac's

thesis that an ideal sign system represents the precise analysis of the perceived object and thereby also enables the adequate combination of its elements. In this respect the chemical nomenclature is perhaps the most famous and impressive illustration of Condillac's pointed formulation that a science is no more than a language that has been developed according to its specific ends ("une langue bien faite").

It is not easy to determine to what extent Helvétius, who knew Condillac personally, was directly indebted to his philosophy when he transferred the insights of sensualism into the realm of social theory in his controversial *De l'esprit* of 1758 and *De l'homme*, which appeared posthumously in 1772. Sensualism corresponded so exactly to the ideals of the French Enlightenment that it would be mistaken to want to detect a direct personal influence of Condillac in too large a number of areas. Helvétius's arguments about the abuse of language and its political and social causes could just as well have been suggested by Locke as by Condillac.

Condillac's supreme importance for the "Ideologues," the representatives of a last great stage of sensualism immediately following the French Revolution, is, however, incontestable.<sup>45</sup> Among the guests of the salons of Madame Helvétius, who survived her husband by three decades and attracted the leading minds of her time, were not only Condillac, d'Alembert, Holbach, Condorcet and Turgot, but also future Ideologues such as Destutt de Tracy and Cabanis. Shortly before his death in 1794, Condorcet wrote his famous *Esquisse d'un tableau historique des progrès de l'esprit humain* from a perspective basically influenced by Condillac.

The designation "Ideology" and its derivation "Ideologues" were coined by the man seen to be the leader of the movement, Destutt de Tracy (1754–1836). By that term he wanted to designate the science of ideas, since Condillac had after all demanded the constant analysis of ideas as the prerequisite for correct thinking. In diverse areas of public life and science the Ideologues oriented their thought along the lines of sensualistic philosophy. In the programs of the educational institutions created by the Revolution they tried to make the analysis of human understanding in connection with the analysis of language an essential subject of study. Destutt de Tracy devoted an entire volume of his *Éléments d'idéologie*, which began to appear in 1801, to the theory of grammar. Yet within the group of Ideologues there also occurred a distancing from the persistent sensualism of Condillac, and in particular from his concept of "sensation transformée"; this was owing not least of all to the accusation that sensualistic philosophy led to materialism. This was a judgment that soon thereafter was formulated even more emphatically and then extended to Condillac's philosophy of language, which was accused of having materialized the intellectual nature of human beings and placed into question the divine origins of humanity and of society.

### Sensualism in the sights of reaction: Condillac and the “Affaire de Prades”

Categorizing sensualistic theory as a historical event after the fact would certainly make its social and anthropological implications clear, and not only from the standpoint of the Restoration.

But did Condillac and his contemporaries themselves see the anthropological implications of the sensualistic theory of language? Was this theory in fact a strategically employed instrument for advancing a sensualistic conception of humanity? The deliberation with which linguistic arguments had already been used in seventeenth-century philosophical and anthropological debates from both rationalistic as well as sensualistic perspectives suggests an affirmative answer to this question. In order to come closer to such an answer, I will in the following pages locate sensualistic philosophy and those of its characteristic aspects that relate to language philosophy in their historical context.

In addition to other works that have already been mentioned and were indebted to sensualism, Condillac's *Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines* of 1746 preceded the appearance of the *Encyclopédie*, the first volume of which, in 1751, represented the beginning of the culminating years of the French Enlightenment. In his *Lettre sur les aveugles* of 1749, Diderot's sensualism was based on Condillac's *Essai*. Did Diderot's arrest after the publication of his *Lettres sur les aveugles* contribute to the fact that Condillac distanced himself from direct participation in the *Encyclopédie*? I have already indicated that he was mentioned in 1751 in d'Alembert's programmatic introduction.

In the same year, La Mettrie's *Œuvres philosophiques* appeared in a single volume.<sup>46</sup> Beginning the volume is *L'homme machine*, the original publication of which caused a scandal in 1748. Following it is the *Traité de l'âme*, which is a considerably more comprehensive text. It is just as openly materialistic as *L'homme machine*, but it displays a far more clearly formulated sensualism. The arguments of this work concerning the sensible origin of ideas led to the final conclusion that “The feeling being is thus of a material nature” (title of paragraph IX, chapter X). Just as Condillac had done in his *Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines*, La Mettrie's text emphasizes the communicative capacities of animals and goes beyond Condillac in the greater pointedness of his formulations (“Animals express their ideas through the same signs as ours”; title of paragraph III, chapter XI). And the chapter entitled “Stories that confirm the sensible origin of all our ideas” begins with the example cited by Condillac in his *Essai* of the deaf-mute who attended Mass for years without having the least idea of God; when his hearing was suddenly restored, he could be instructed about God's existence.<sup>47</sup> In a manner that was consistent with his cautious tactics, Condillac had rendered this example in a less aggressive form than La Mettrie, whose *Traité de l'âme* became a decidedly more compromising text for the advocates of sensualism.

In November of the same year, 1751, a dissertation was defended at the Sorbonne that unleashed the famous “Affaire de Prades.”<sup>48</sup> The echo of this scandal resounded for several years thereafter and contributed to an increased awareness of the consequences of contemporary sensualism for world-view and particularly for anthropology. Within the context of the “Affaire de Prades,” Descartes’s doctrine of innate ideas was declared to be an article of faith.

An essential cause of the “Affaire de Prades” was that the *Encyclopédie* simultaneously began to appear. The criticism and condemnation that came forth during the course of the “Affaire” were just as often directed against the *Encyclopédie* as against the Abbé Jean-Martin de Prades, his dissertation, and his written defenses, one of which was probably written by Diderot. In addition, de Prades had written a contribution for the second volume of the *Encyclopédie*, which appeared in January 1752. De Prades himself complained that he was the target of attacks that were really directed against the *Encyclopédie*.<sup>49</sup> It was even asserted that the real author of the dissertation was Diderot. The legal proceedings conducted against de Prades, which he prevented occurring by fleeing, took place at the same time as a campaign to prohibit the further publication of the *Encyclopédie*.<sup>50</sup>

The first of the ten condemned theses of de Prades’s dissertation is the sensualistic assumption that all knowledge stems from sensation. The text prepared by the Sorbonne’s censor accuses these theses of being “blasphemous, heretical, favorable to materialism, harmful to society and domestic peace, a false portrayal of the concepts of good and evil and the origin of natural law, capable of destroying supernatural religion.”<sup>51</sup>

The view of humanity, society, and history in de Prades’s work is indeed developed according to sensualistic premises. One of the numerous writings that were published in connection with the affair thus speaks of the “connection of the rest of the dissertation with that principle which is, so to speak, the first link in a chain, namely the origin of all our knowledge in sense impressions.”<sup>52</sup> The reproach leveled at the first of the theses in the dissertation was thus that it promoted materialism.

The second condemned thesis was cited as being “harmful to society and domestic peace.” This was a reference to the assumption that the origin of society could be traced back to the fact that human beings had discovered the use of organizing themselves; human society would therefore be a creation of humans themselves. Condillac had expressed this hypothesis in his *Essai sur l’origine des connaissances humaines*, and d’Alembert had taken it up again in the preface to the *Encyclopédie*. De Prades, however, goes beyond Condillac by not only deriving the origin of the laws of social coexistence from the human origin of society—which he saw in conjunction with the sensible origin of ideas—but also deriving from this the knowledge of good and evil, of natural law, and even the origin of that “barbaric right of inequality that has been called the right of the strongest.”<sup>53</sup>

A few years afterwards, in 1755, Rousseau’s *Discours sur l’origine de*

*l'inégalité* appeared, which also incorporated fundamental aspects of Condillac's sensualism, including his sensualistic thesis of the origin of language. When Helvétius's book *De l'esprit* of 1758 then caused a new scandal, and court prosecution soon thereafter, the Chief State Counsel received his predecessor's text of the indictment of the Abbé de Prades, with the notice: "You will see that this dissertation advances precisely the same doctrine as the book *De l'esprit* and the *Encyclopédie*."<sup>54</sup>

This is not the place to analyze all of the particulars of the "Affaire de Prades," in which the rivalries between the Jesuits, Jansenists, and the Sorbonne also played a major role. But it is important to point out that Condillac's name and his *Essai* were mentioned in the course of the "Affaire de Prades"; this could not possibly have been a matter of no concern to Condillac. This is important for an understanding of Condillac's later works, even though within the context of the "Affaire de Prades" the name of Locke was cited considerably more often than that of Condillac as the progenitor of sensualistic philosophy.

The reproach leveled against de Prades, namely that his sensualistic premise promoted materialism, was strengthened by reference to Locke's hypothesis that the Almighty Creator had possibly granted a certain portion of matter the capacity of thought, so that the human soul could be of a physical nature. Locke was therefore accused of wanting to accord to human beings a "soul of mud" ("une âme de boue"). The opponents of de Prades used this argument to indicate the dangerous consequences of sensualism. In order to refute this reproach, de Prades appealed to Condillac's *Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines* in the second part of his apology, because there it had been proven, according to de Prades, that the rejection of innate ideas did not necessarily lead to an assumption of matter capable of thought.<sup>55</sup>

This was followed by an answer that I will cite in detail, because it mentions Condillac by name and places him on the same level as Locke regarding his pioneering role in the development of materialism:

You may appeal all you want to the fact that Locke's system of the origin of ideas was placed in a new light by Monsieur Abbé Condillac in his *Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines*, a book of which people say that it is in everyone's hands, and which the journalists of Trévoux are supposed to have praised.<sup>56</sup> And if you add that this system is being taught by the supposedly best professors at the Parisian universities (which certainly does no credit to their metaphysics),<sup>57</sup> then we answer to you that you are trying to support yourself on a broken straw, that these insignificant authorities you name can never justify the wicked consequences to which Locke's system necessarily leads; the wickedness of these consequences shows, rather, much more irrefutably the depravity of the system that has taken you to this point...a system that, under the pretext of explaining by means of some sort of

mechanism the sequence, connection, and progress of our knowledge, in reality puts into question its very foundations and aims at the destruction of the basis of natural law.<sup>58</sup>

The last of these accusations applies even more to Condillac's sensualism than to Locke's since it was after all Condillac, as opposed to Locke, who had emphasized the genesis of knowledge as a historical process.

The reference to Condillac is clear in another work written against de Prades, the first part of which, over forty pages long, bears the title: "On Human Beings and on the Progress of their Knowledge."<sup>59</sup> Condillac is then attacked quite explicitly in the two-volume work by Antoine-Martin Roche, *Traité de la nature de l'âme et de l'origine de ses connaissances, contre le système de Locke et de ses partisans*.<sup>60</sup> Also arising out of the "Affaire de Prades," this work thus even refers to Condillac's *Essai* on "the origin of knowledge" in its title.

In the extensive chapter "On Mr. Locke's System as it has been reformed by several of his advocates,"<sup>61</sup> Condillac assumes center-stage. For more than one hundred pages, his *Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines*, d'Alembert's preface to the *Encyclopédie*, and the three parts of the *Apologie*, or the defense writings of de Prades, are alternately quoted. Condillac is presented as the author whose reform of Locke's system had achieved the "greatest notoriety."<sup>62</sup> Condillac is accused of having avoided several of "Locke's errors," but of having been led to consequences that were even more injurious than the English philosopher's original system. It is true, the author stated, the new system maintains that the soul is non-corporeal, but it explains the origin of ideas in a fashion that leads one to doubt entirely the existence of the soul before sense activity begins, since all intellectual faculties are, according to Condillac, gradually formed as the extension of sensation, and even the clearest ideas have their origin in sense activity. Whatever the nature of the soul was that Locke recognized, his system did not allow for doubt that fully developed intellectual faculties, or the soul, existed before sense activity began.

The "new system" was further criticized for having given a highly dangerous thesis the appearance of orthodoxy by referring to the Bible, as when it asserts that humanity had innate ideas before the fall from grace, but that after original sin all ideas stemmed from sense experience. Condillac had said this in his text in order to justify the necessity of looking for the origin of ideas and language only in reference to the condition in which humanity has found itself since the Fall. And Condillac had even added that for the philosopher it did not suffice to say "that something had come about in a supernatural way; he has rather the task of explaining how it could have occurred naturally."<sup>63</sup>

It was thus no surprise that in this text, which had arisen out of the "Affaire de Prades," Condillac's system is accused of going so far as to derive the knowledge of the most important moral laws from sense

experience. Accordingly, just the notion of the existence of God would be—as Locke had already stated—“purely a work of the human mind,” even if Condillac had not directly expressed this conclusion, “against which his pen had resisted”(!).<sup>64</sup> The example cited by both Condillac and La Mettrie of the deaf-mute who was only later instructed about the existence of God, is then corrected in a separate section from a rationalist perspective.<sup>65</sup> The same text characterizes de Prades as an author who was less timid (“moins timide”) than Condillac and therefore went beyond him. Condillac had thus “reformed” Locke’s system in a manner that prepared the way for de Prades.

Immediately following the discussion of the most dangerous consequences that resulted from Condillac’s sensualism are several chapters that demonstrate that de Prades only needed to go one more step in the direction indicated by Condillac in order to formulate more pointedly several sensualistic theses that had occasioned the incensed condemnation of the “Affaire.” De Prades did after all go so far as to declare expressly that it is not contrary to faith to claim that matter is the effective cause of all our sensations and thus of all our ideas. The idea of God would be nothing other than the transference onto a higher being of all of those perfect qualities which humanity has perceived in other beings and especially in itself.<sup>66</sup> Similarly, the idea of infinity would be the result of the human ability to create abstractions. The concept of natural law is interpreted as a product of human history, since the idea of justice, and thus also of moral good and evil, results, according to de Prades, who is here cited verbatim, from the revolt of reason against tyranny, and this occurs all the more insistently the more oppressive is the tyranny.<sup>67</sup>

The final result of these chapters on the “reformers” of Locke’s system is the conclusion that in the new sensualistic system the thesis about the sensory origin of all ideas amounts to nothing more than the opinion that humans received from their Creator only the most undignified qualities, namely those they have in common with animals, and that they owe “the highest things” to themselves alone.<sup>68</sup>

This vehement critique of Condillac’s sensualism, of de Prades and of the *Encyclopédie* is embedded in a thousand-page rejection of the sensualistic premise together with an extensive apologetics for dualism and innate ideas. The most important philosophical problems discussed in the debate I have previously traced are thus taken up here in order to reject the consequences derived from the sensualistic premise: the materiality or immateriality of the soul, the postulate of innate ideas as a necessary consequence of the spirituality or immortality of the soul, the imperfection of sense perception, the problem concerning a soul in animals. The dependence of intellectual faculties on the organic structure, which the Cartesians Cordemoy and Lamy discussed in connection with problems of linguistics, was taken up again to show that the “difference between souls and their perfection” does not have physical causes alone.<sup>69</sup> The problem of the existence of a soul in animals was thus debated in a form that attempted, by assuming that animals had an

immaterial, though not an immortal soul, to relinquish an extreme rationalism without doubting the absolutely unique status of human beings.<sup>70</sup>

The effort to refute sensualism on the broadest possible front also included the repudiation of the fundamentals of a sensualistic aesthetics, which Condillac had extensively treated in his *Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines*. In this revisionist view, the concept of beauty, like all other knowledge, is traced back to intellectual faculties that have a supernatural origin. In a fashion similar to that of the Port-Royal *Logic*, Augustine is the most frequently quoted Church authority for rationalistic epistemology, moral theory, and aesthetics.<sup>71</sup>

Antoine-Martin Roche's *Traité de la nature de l'âme et de l'origine de ses connaissances, contre le système de Locke et de ses partisans* is the most extensive anti-sensualistic tract to have emerged from the "Affaire de Prades." But it did not appear until 1759, four years after its author had died. However, I have already quoted from a text that accused Condillac, in connection with the "Affaire de Prades," of having created a philosophic system that, like that of Locke, led to materialism.<sup>72</sup> A similar reproach was levelled in 1756 at Condillac's *Traité des animaux*.

For Condillac, the years following the "Affaire de Prades" were thus anything but propitious for accepting Voltaire's invitation to edit a new full-scale exposition of his sensualistic system. In 1756, Voltaire wanted to offer him the best possible conditions at his estate near Geneva for the composition of such a "methodical and comprehensive work": "You will partially go beyond Locke, and you will partially contradict him, and often you will agree with him. I think that our nation lacks such a book...you could not employ your time in a better fashion."<sup>73</sup>

It would doubtless have been a considerable risk for Condillac to have once again "gone beyond Locke." When, in his letter of invitation, Voltaire mentioned the "Parisian uproar" that Condillac should leave behind in order to occupy himself with the edition of a new sensualistic programmatic treatise, he certainly was not thinking simply of the normal bustle of the city. Voltaire had followed the "Affaire de Prades" with understandable interest and he characteristically described it in his essay *Le Tombeau de la Sorbonne* of 1753. A new sensualistic manifesto would thus have been most welcome to him in these circumstances, especially since he had caused a stir himself two decades before with his *Lettres philosophiques*, which advocated Locke's sensualism.

Was Condillac in 1756 already informed of the possibility of an offer to serve as tutor of the Prince of Parma, who was a grandchild of the French king, and of thus obtaining a position whose prestige would also be in the best interests of his philosophy? That would be yet another reason why Condillac's already characteristic reserve was strengthened and why he did not want to compromise himself by approaching Voltaire too closely (who soon thereafter announced with satisfaction that the Prince of Parma was "in good hands"<sup>74</sup>) and cause even more of a ripple by publishing a new

sensualistic manifesto. Following the *Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines*, then, Condillac never again provided a summary of his philosophy. After the 1750s, he conceived of sensualism rather as a method of treating particular questions that were apparently directed less immediately at the basic problems of philosophy, but in which considerations of the philosophy of language remained an important part.

The critical estimations of sensualism I have discussed thus far in connection with the “Affaire de Prades” did not, however, directly deal with de Prades’s language philosophy. But in order to understand its status in Condillac’s later writings, one must consider, however, that the sensualistic theory of language was included in the general condemnation of sensualism as a whole.

I have already indicated that in his *Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité*, Rousseau discusses Condillac’s hypothesis concerning the origin of language and the mutual development of language and thought. For this he eventually earned the following response:

One does not immediately see why this author confuses himself on the subject of languages with considerations that directly touch upon the basis of the problem of society. It is unfortunate for Monsieur Rousseau that he does not see the foundations of religion, which are very important for all of this.<sup>75</sup>

Through the uproar caused by Rousseau’s work, the sensualistic thesis of the origin of language also received even greater attention than through Condillac himself.

One year after the appearance of Rousseau’s work, Johann Peter Süßmilch argued for the divine origin of language in his lecture before the Berlin Academy: *An Attempt to prove that the first Language did not receive its Origin from Human Beings, but solely from the Creator* (“Versuch eines Beweises, daß die erste Sprache ihren Ursprung nicht vom Menschen, sondern allein vom Schöpfer erhalten habe”).<sup>76</sup> This was at least an indirect critique of Condillac, for Süßmilch argued specifically against Maupertuis, whose thesis of the origin of language was greatly indebted to Condillac. Similar to Süßmilch’s position is the stance of the rationalistic Grammarian Nicolas Beauzée who, in the article “Langue” for the *Encyclopédie* (1765, vol. IX) and in his *Grammaire générale* of 1767, argued for the divine origin of language, thought, and society, and thus, like Süßmilch, placed the problem of language origin within a religious framework.

An even more direct and critical statement was made by Formey, the secretary of the Berlin Academy, in a lecture he held in 1762 entitled “A Unification of the principal Means to discover the Origin of Language, Ideas and Human Knowledge.”<sup>77</sup> Formey emphasized that the origin “of humankind, language, and society” formed a whole, and he allowed that

there are even "Christian philosophers" who believe in an ostensible "natural condition that never existed and whose existence was impossible."<sup>78</sup> Formey indicated that such a thesis concerning humanity's "natural condition" brought one into grave proximity with the "atheists." But Formey apparently did not wish to imply that he doubted the honesty of the Christian philosophers to whom he referred. Yet it was precisely in connection with the honesty of Condillac that Formey pronounced a remarkable delimitation: with his statement that the epistemology of Condillac and Charles Bonnet "paves the way for materialism," he did not admit that Condillac was just as unconscious of this as Bonnet. This was certainly a subtle, yet barely concealed insinuation, and it was expressed, moreover, at a time when Condillac was at the court of Parma as the tutor of the French king's grandson.

With that, the question of Condillac's subjective stance toward faith is raised, which is apart from the fact that his philosophy was a source of Enlightenment materialism and was recognized as such very early on. Jean-François Laharpe, who was forty years old at the time of Condillac's death and who later, as a literary historian, went over to the counter-revolution, expressed great doubts about the honesty of Condillac's profession of faith.<sup>79</sup> Bonald and de Maistre then saw in Condillac's seemingly orthodox references merely a camouflaging of his actual opinions.

Condillac's own statements in this regard are problematic. In his *Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines* he decidedly rejected the assumption that there was matter capable of thought with the argument that the body, as a heterogeneous combination of matter, cannot be the carrier of the unity of consciousness and therewith the subject of thought, which was an opinion that received understandable approval in the review of his *Essai* by the clerical *Journal de Trévoux*.<sup>80</sup> Yet, in his description of the development and execution of cognitive operations, Condillac proceeded just as much from physical events when he saw the origin of all cognition in sensation as when he viewed the connection of cognitive processes with the use of signs.

Condillac certainly did not express his opinion freely with regard to the explosive question of religion. A prime example of this is the way in which he only quoted the Biblical explanation with respect to the origin of language in order to bracket it from philosophical inquiry.<sup>81</sup> One repeatedly finds in his monumental work on ancient and modern history references to how dangerous it could be to come into conflict with ecclesiastical dogma by expressing new philosophical and scientific knowledge. And similarly Condillac indicated that in these situations it is correct to employ indirect methods for the propagation of truth instead of letting it come to a dangerous confrontation with the dominant opinion.

Condillac doubtless made this maxim his own with respect to his actions and writings as a philosopher. There was good reason for this cautionary tactic, as the previous discussion of the orthodox criticism of sensualism has

shown. In this context a question suggests itself that, to my knowledge, has never been answered. Why did Condillac not publish any new independent works (or at least none we know of under his name)<sup>82</sup> from 1755, when his *Traité des animaux* appeared, until 1775, when his *Cours d'étude* finally appeared?

When he was accused in 1756 of having furthered the cause of materialism with his *Traité des animaux*, he answered the charge with his *Lettre de M. l'Abbé de Condillac à l'auteur des Lettres à un Américain*, a text that first appeared in 1756 in the "Mercure de France" and then, after 1766, was included in new editions of the *Traité des animaux*. One of the arguments he used to refute the accusation of advancing materialism was the following assertion:

I am an ardent follower of Locke only because I believe I have rendered an important service to religion by saving the philosophy of this Englishman for it ("en lui conservant la philosophie de cet Anglais") in that I explain his philosophy in such a way that it is impossible for the materialists to abuse it.<sup>83</sup>

Condillac reproached his critic, on the other hand, for rendering a poor service to religion by demonstrating that Locke's philosophy leads to materialism. In addition, he ought not to forget in his zeal that an unjust judgment of an author's work also commits an injustice to the author.

I thus beg you, Monsieur, to be more cautious and just in your criticisms. You owe it to religion, and to those whose opinions you oppose, but most of all to yourself: for your reputation depends upon it. Otherwise, I merely thought it necessary to respond to you because it affected religion. In every other case I would have waited for the public's judgment of us.<sup>84</sup>

This eloquent text demonstrates with the greatest possible clarity how much Condillac feared that his philosophy would be touched by the accusation of being irreligious.

In all probability this was thus one of the reasons, if not indeed the decisive reason, why Condillac did not publish a new book for approximately two decades. To be sure, the publication of the *Cours d'étude* was delayed because of scruples on the part of the authorities in Parma. But it would have been easy for Condillac to have let various parts of it appear as individual works after 1760, instead of waiting to publish the entire *Cours* in 1775, or at a time when the *Encyclopédie* had already been completed for several years and the risk of causing public outrage and official reactions by publishing sensualistic works had substantially diminished. The following analysis of Condillac's *Grammar* will show that even this text gave occasion for such a cautious author to avoid publishing it too early.

### Sensualistic philosophy as language philosophy in Condillac's *Grammar*

The attacks against sensualism during and after the "Affaire de Prades" and the direct mention of Condillac's name in connection with that affair confirms the suspicion that for these reasons, as well as for others, he had cause to welcome his stay in Parma as the tutor of the grandson of Louis XV.<sup>85</sup>

Condillac's official appointment to this post occurred in January 1758, and his residence in Parma began in April of the same year. The "Affaire de Prades" and the publication of Rousseau's *Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité* preceded this sinecure, and it was followed in the same year by the beginning of the scandal and of the judicial proceedings unleashed by Helvétius's book *De l'esprit*, and again with a simultaneous campaign to prevent the further publication of the *Encyclopédie*.

Helvétius's work went beyond the sensualistic premise and advocated an unabashed materialism, and he even drew grave consequences with regard to social theory. He was saved from the worst only by virtue of his connections to the highest circles of society. Challenged to make a statement by his Parisian correspondents, Condillac spoke with praise of the unblemished character of Helvétius, but he avoided a discussion of the actual issues in the book.<sup>86</sup> In a fashion similar to his defense against the reproach of materialism in connection with his own *Traité des animaux*, Condillac played off the blamelessness of the author's person against a compromising criticism of his writings.

At this time, shortly after his arrival in Parma, Condillac sketched out the ten-year project for the Prince of Parma's course of study, the first part of which was the *Grammar*.<sup>87</sup> However, Condillac preceded the *Cours d'étude* of the education of the prince with a cycle of *Leçons préliminaires*.<sup>88</sup> In all probability, he thus finished the edition of the *Grammar* at the end of 1758 or in the course of 1759. Before the *Grammar* was published in 1775 as the first part of the sixteen-volume *Cours d'étude*, Condillac had already revised it, as his reference to several publications that appeared in the intervening period shows.<sup>89</sup>

Despite the occasionally threatening criticisms of sensualism (which in some cases were directed against Condillac personally) that were expressed before and during the first edition of the *Cours d'étude*, as well as up to the time of its final publication, Condillac did not refrain from setting forth the fundamental principles of his sensualism in various parts of that work. His history writings are also in many respects anything but orthodox.<sup>90</sup>

There is evidence that Condillac decided to publish the various works collected within the *Cours d'étude* under a title that commanded respect and excluded any suspicion not only for reasons of prestige, but rather in the interest of securing an unhindered dissemination of his ideas. The title page of each of the sixteen volumes, beginning with the *Grammar*, is almost

completely filled with a heading that was certainly not just an expression of Condillac's dutiful homage toward his former pupil:

Course of Study for the Education of the Prince of Parma, today His Royal Highness Infante Don Ferdinand, Duke of Parma, Piacenza, Fuastalla, etc. etc. etc. Written by Monsieur Abbé de Condillac, Member of the French Academy and the Academies of Berlin, Parma and Lyon, formerly the Preceptor of His Royal Highness.

Pater Andrea Mazza, whom the Bishop of Parma enlisted to assess the *Cours* immediately after its publication, was not mistaken when he confirmed that this text was at a far remove from the orthodoxy promised by its title and its pedagogical purpose. Although the censor had received only those volumes which were devoted to history, his conclusions concerning the "hidden poison" he found there and the "indirect method" of undermining religion are not without interest in regard to other parts of the *Cours*, including the *Grammar*.<sup>91</sup>

If it is true that the entire *Cours d'étude* bore a title that might eliminate any suspicion, then this especially applies to the title of the *Grammar* and to the heading of its first main section as well: "On the analysis of discourse" ("De l'analyse du discours"). The first eight chapters of this section are a sensualistic manifesto. Condillac presented here the principles of his sensualism in the form of reflections on the origin and development of language and the function of signs. At a time when the waves of indignation over Helvétius's book *De l'esprit* had not yet subsided in Paris and a campaign against the *Encyclopédie* was still under way, Condillac had provided, in the guise of the *Grammar*, an introductory course on his sensualistic philosophy for the grandson of Louis XV.<sup>92</sup>

In his *Grammar*, Condillac discussed the same aspects of linguistic theory that had already been an essential part of the *Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines*. The headings of the individual chapters announce topics that had already been treated in the *Essai* (Chapter I: "On the language of action"; II: "General reflections on the origin and development of languages"; III: "The art of analyzing our ideas" ("L'art d'analyser nos pensées"); IV: "How necessary artificial signs are for decomposing the operations of our souls and giving us distinct ideas about them"; V: "Which method one must use in order to receive distinct ideas of every kind"; VI: "Language viewed as analytic method"; VII: "How the language of action analyzes a thought"; VIII: "How languages in their infancy analyze a thought"; the following chapter IX begins with the analysis of a thought by means of a completely formed articulated phonetic language and investigates this with reference to French.<sup>93</sup>

Condillac subdivided his *Grammar* into two main sections. The first is entitled "On the analysis of discourse" ("De l'analyse du discours") and the second, "On the elements of discourse" ("Des éléments du discours"). Condillac presented the first part as a "general grammar," "with the help of

which we can discover the elements of languages” (“les éléments du langage”) and “the rules common to all languages” (“les régies communes à toutes les langues”).<sup>94</sup> The task of the second part is to analyze the elements of language found in French. With that Condillac followed the organization that had become traditional during the eighteenth century in a “grammaire générale,” which dealt with the universal foundations and rules of language, and a “grammaire particulière,” the object of which was to demonstrate the specific manifestations of these rules in the individual languages.

The sensualistic theses presented in these chapters go somewhat further than the *Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines* in their accentuation of linguistic theory, for example with an explicit attempt to offer a sensualistic foundation for a “general grammar.” The propositions of the chapters can be summarized as follows:

- 1 All ideas have their origin in sensation, and they are developed thanks to their interaction with signs. The sign system that is most highly developed is articulated phonetic language.
- 2 The sense-bound origin of ideas is also the source of the universal laws of thought and of the rules common to all languages, and hence of the principles of general grammar.
- 3 Articulated phonetic language developed from the gestures and non-articulated sounds of the language of action. The first signs of the languages of action were a naturally occurring result of the human organism, just as the language of action in animals is a result of their physical condition.
- 4 The unfolding and development of thought is made possible by the decomposition of feelings and thoughts with the aid of signs; in this sense, languages represent analytical methods. The interaction of ideas and signs results in a process of the mutual perfection of cognitive and sign systems, beginning with the language of action, all the way to the different grades of perfection evident in articulated phonetic language.
- 5 Beginning with the language of action, human needs are the impetus for the dynamics powering cognitive and sign systems. Human needs lead to observations and experiences that are always supported by previously acquired knowledge and signs, and yet simultaneously depend upon these and perfect them. Human needs thus cause a constant dynamism of mutual dependence between cognitive and sign systems.

All of these hypotheses, from the explanation of the origin of language to the role of language for thought, and applying equally to the language of action in animals, directly contradict rationalistic theory.

Condillac’s discussion of the language of action and of the intellectual capacities in animals is directed against Descartes’s automaton hypothesis, which disallowed any cognitive and communicative capacity in animals, which were in Descartes’s view purely material beings. Even Buffon had

adopted this hypothesis and had deduced from the assumption that certain animals had the same brain structure and similar organs of articulation as humans that the human capacity for thought and language could only be an extension of a non-corporeal substance.<sup>95</sup> By way of response to Buffon, Condillac, in his *Traité des animaux*, had presupposed a soul—that is, cognitive faculties and a “language” (“langage”)—in animals as well.

In the *Grammar*, Condillac mainly mentioned the language of action in animals in order to emphasize that it, as well as the first signs of the human language of action, was a result of the condition of their organism, so that the differences from species to species between the language of action arise from the different nature of their bodily organization. In this respect, the language of action is a “natural language of all of the individuals of the same species,”<sup>96</sup> even if it is partially learned. On this basis, Condillac arrived at important conclusions, among them, above all, his sensualistic justification of a general grammar:

“The nature of our organs”—or, what was the same thing in contemporary usage both in French and German, the “organization” common to all human beings—is the foundation of the universal laws of thought and language.<sup>97</sup> For the bodily organs are the organs of sense activity, which is the origin of all forms of knowledge and communication. More emphatically than in the *Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines*, Condillac thus emphasized in his *Grammar* the physical nature of human beings in his explanation of the origin of language and its role in thought.

Thinking is generally seen as being the same in all human beings. In everyone, thinking arises from sensation: in everyone it is constructed in the same way and it is analyzed in the same way... The method employed by human beings is here subjected to the same rules in all languages. But this method uses different signs in the various languages ...and every language has unique rules.<sup>98</sup>

With this presentation of the origin of thought and language and its emphasis on physical preconditions, Condillac again contradicted the very basis of rationalistic postulates; and even though he named particular hypotheses of rationalism, he chose to interpret them from an opposite perspective. Thus Condillac also assumed the existence of the universal foundations of thought, but he did not see them in an immaterial “raison,” but rather in the human physical condition. In proceeding from this postulate he rejected other rationalistic hypotheses by using arguments based on linguistic theory: he discarded the hypothesis of innate ideas by emphasizing the sense-bound origin of all ideas and their development in conjunction with language; and simultaneously he rejected the assumption of cognition that existed independently of language, which Descartes and Port-Royal had expressly advanced against sensualism. And Condillac’s thesis that languages are the analytic methods of thought, the mastery of which determines the degree of

correct thinking of which one is capable, is again, as it was in the *Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines*, a reversal of Descartes's dictum that the quality of understanding is the same for all people, but that all people did not possess the method of using it to the same degree.<sup>99</sup> Finally, he articulated an eminently conscious response to Descartes's "cogito ergo sum" when Condillac defined the meaning of the verb "to be" ("être") as "to sense, to have sensations" ("sentir, avoir des sensations") in his *Grammar*.<sup>100</sup>

Characteristically, Condillac even expressed the hypothesis of the sensory origin of ideas in his *Grammar* in a way that obviously referred to the objections of the Port-Royal *Logic* against sensualism, namely the argument that by proceeding from sensation it was impossible to arrive at abstract ideas. Condillac replied to this in connection with the role of signs in the formation of clear ideas: "It suffices to have senses to have abstract ideas."<sup>101</sup> For, with the aid of signs, one can view one quality in isolation from the other qualities with which it is associated and in this way form an abstract idea. In a like manner, cognitive operations such as "attention, comparison, judgment, etc. are nothing more than transformed sensation" ("la sensation transformée"), because they are sensation decomposed into its elemental components ("la sensation décomposée"), that is sensation observed successively from various points of view.<sup>102</sup> Language, however, is the sign system *par excellence* whose linear progress enables the successive analysis and thus the conscious grasping of perceptions that, as sensation, are only a confused whole.<sup>103</sup>

The categorization and thus the unfolding and development of thought with the aid of signs, as well as the mutual dependence of epistemological and semiotic systems that is occasioned by our needs, had also been presented previously in the *Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines*. The *Grammar* subsequently treated these problems individually by focusing first on the language of action (Chapters I and VII), then on the formation of articulated phonetic language (Chapters II and VIII) and finally on the full formation of languages (Chapters IX and thereafter). In the course of this development, "natural signs," or the first signs of the language of action, are gradually replaced by "artificial signs" which humans create during the process of their historical experience. Since artificial signs are simultaneously the result and the instrument of the progressive development of thought, their cognitive role also determines their communicative function, for communication presupposed the "analysis of thought" as the first function of language:

You have seen how much we need artificial signs in order to distinguish between the various operations of our soul that occur in sensation; and we have seen how we must use these signs in order to receive ideas of all kinds. The first task of language is thus to analyze a thought...one would therefore be deluding oneself if one believed that languages are only useful for the communication of our thoughts.<sup>104</sup>

This hypothesis of the mutual determination of thought and language was an

additional objection against Descartes and the Port-Royal *Logic*, whose conception of the non-corporeal nature of cognition granted to languages merely the role of a material instrument for the communication of thoughts. Condillac was not unaware that Descartes and, after him, the Port-Royal *Logic* had advanced this rationalistic argument against Hobbes who expressed doubt concerning the non-corporeal nature of cognition by referring to the cognitive role of the word. We have seen that Descartes and the Port-Royal *Logic* cited the arbitrary character of the linguistic sign as a response to this objection. The arbitrary character of the linguistic sign, they argued, was, as proof of the substantial difference between signs and ideas, also proof of the independence of thought from language.

All the more interesting are thus Condillac's arguments in his *Grammar* regarding the characterization of the linguistic sign as "arbitrary," or rather as "artificial." Condillac here rejected the designation of the signs of articulated phonetic language as "arbitrary" and he proposed calling them instead "artificial" ("artificiel").<sup>105</sup>

These considerations are an important refinement of the problem of the sign as it was presented in his *Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines*, and they reveal a conscious rejection of the characterization of the linguistic sign brought forth by Descartes and Port-Royal as a response to Hobbes. In the *Essai* Condillac differentiated between, on the one hand, "natural" signs and, on the other, the signs used in articulated phonetic language. The latter were "institutional signs, that is those which we have chosen ourselves, and have merely an arbitrary connection ('rapport arbitraire') with our ideas."<sup>106</sup> In his *Essai*, Condillac thus still viewed linguistic signs simultaneously as "institutional" and "arbitrary," wherein he followed Locke who even expressly described words as being "completely arbitrary."<sup>107</sup>

In his *Grammar*; however, Condillac proposed calling them "artificial" and not "arbitrary" since the latter designation was not appropriate to the functional character of the linguistic sign:

What then are arbitrary signs? They would be such that they would be chosen without reason and merely according to mood. They would thus be utterly unintelligible. Artificial signs, on the other hand, are of such a nature that their choice is justified by reason: they have to be conceived of with such skill that our understanding of them is prepared by signs that are already familiar to us.<sup>108</sup>

Since the first "familiar signs" were the natural signs of the originary language of action, Condillac wanted to show that within the language of action humans had already begun to institute artificial signs, for example certain gestures that were in no way naturally present and thus still have to be learned today in communication.

This hypothesis that the first artificial signs were already present within the language of action supports the assumption of an uninterrupted transition from

natural signs to articulated phonetic language in so far as the transition already begins with the first artificial signs of the language of action. In the beginning, the first elements of articulated phonetic language were solely a “complement to the language of action.” But within a long historical process these elements reduced the language of action to the role of merely an additional means of expression, which, in contrast to phonetic language, are still today represented by gestures, mimicry, certain accents and interjections. “Nature gave them to us,” Condillac says of the very first signs, “but in this way she also showed us the course we had to pursue in order to find new signs ourselves.”<sup>109</sup> Thus once again interpretation of the sign is supposed to make clear that the perfectibility of humankind and its own creative role result in an unbroken transition from the state of nature to the level of culture.

Since “artificial” or “institutional” signs arose from “natural” signs, the transition from the one to the other could occur without a break since human beings always proceeded on the basis of familiar signs—a condition that applied to the function of all new signs. Condillac repeatedly underscored that the general principle for the enrichment of sign systems was therefore analogy. Analogy, as a way of referring to signs that are already familiar, is the necessary condition for the function and enrichment of artificial signs even after they have become independent from natural signs. Whether one is thus speaking of the transition from natural signs to the first artificial signs, and from thence to the signs of articulated phonetic language and its historical further development, the human communicative community always proceeds from analogy to analogy in the creation of new signs. When Condillac said that human beings always proceed from “signs that are already familiar” in this process, he was describing a phenomenon that in modern linguistics is characterized as the “motivation” of the linguistic sign.

The institutional or artificial character of linguistic signs thus guaranteed their functional connection with ideas. In this functional view of language as an instrument of knowledge and communication that arises historically and develops in a continuous fashion, signs thus do not stand in an arbitrary relationship to their meanings. The difference evident in words from language to language, which Descartes and his followers had cited as proof for the completely arbitrary character of signs, indeed proves that the same idea can be named with the aid of different signs. But it is above all proof of the fact that the institutional or artificial character of the linguistic sign allows every language to guarantee the relation between signs and thoughts with the means appropriate to it.

By rejecting the term “arbitrary” as a characterization of the linguistic sign in his *Grammar* in this way, even though he had previously used it himself, Condillac equated his terminology with the arguments which he had already made in the *Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines* and in the *Traité des animaux* concerning the interdependence between the creative role of human beings and the potency of signs. I have already indicated that in these works Condillac presented the institutional character of human

linguistic signs, which arose from natural signs during a long development, as the fundamental difference setting apart the communicative means of humans from those of animals, who only possess natural signs and thus remain on the level of knowledge and capacities appropriate to their individual species. Human beings, however, emancipate themselves from the stage of a merely passive assimilation to nature, at which animals remain, owing to their ability to create language. With the help of the mutual development of language and thought, human society assumes an active and creative role and enters into a historical dimension, since language allows social experience to accumulate and to be handed down from generation to generation.<sup>110</sup>

The theory presented in the first eight chapters of Condillac's *Grammar* concerning the origin and function of language is a concentrated reproduction of his sensualistic system in the form of a linguistic theory and thus has the coherence of that system. But how did this system relate to the grammar of an individual language, which Condillac examined in the following final sections, namely to the analysis of the French language "as it is today"?<sup>111</sup> Did one encounter a similar coherence here, too? The question raised here concerns whether and how the principles of a general theory of language based on sensualism have an effect on the study of the grammar of an individual language.

One must mention at the outset that when Condillac spoke of the analysis of "fully formed and perfected languages," the opposition between the sensualistic and rationalistic perspective could not be so radical as in the interpretation of the origin of thought and language. For both views presuppose at least some connection between cognition and the grammatical structure of articulated phonetic language.

In the rationalistic view this connection results from the merely communicative function of language, in the sensualistic view from its simultaneously communicative and cognitive function. Can, therefore, the interpretation of the grammar of an individual language be distinguished by the difference of these two points of view, where the one proceeds from the conception of thought as "sensation transformée," and the other from innate principles of thought? It must be added that the thesis Condillac himself proposed certainly applied to him as well, namely that the progress of knowledge and language occurs in constant reliance upon the knowledge and linguistic signs that were already available. Condillac was therefore also unable to proceed directly from his general theory of language to the elaboration of a French grammar. Rather, he consolidated a number of available analyses of French and he mentioned several of their authors: "Port-Royal," Régnier-Desmarais, Girard, Du Marsais, Beauzée, and de Brosses.<sup>112</sup>

In order to investigate systematically whether truly new perspectives emerge in Condillac's French *Grammar* and in what they consist, a detailed comparison of his text with the most important contemporary works on the

subject would be necessary. Such a comparison would have to begin at least with the Port-Royal *Grammar* and, in addition, take into consideration the debates that had been taking place since the seventeenth century about grammatical problems and their connection with philosophical questions. This work still remains in its infancy, although today several comprehensive studies on linguistic theories of the eighteenth century have been done,<sup>113</sup> and some new analyses devoted especially to Condillac's *Grammar*<sup>114</sup> have begun to open this problem to further inquiry. I can only indicate a few of the problems that are probably characteristic of Condillac's sensualistic point of view concerning the portrayal of French grammar.

One important observation, first of all, is that Condillac's external organization of the entire work into two main parts, that is into a "general grammar" and a grammar of French as an individual language, does not correspond to the actual organization of the contents of the work. For the grammar of individual languages does not just begin as the second part of the book designated to deal with this subject, but rather it already begins in the ninth chapter of the first main section entitled "How the analysis of a thought proceeds in fully formed and perfected languages."<sup>115</sup>

At this point the speculative part of the *Grammar* concludes and the analysis of the French language commences. The preceding chapter treats the analysis of a thought as the "initial stage" of languages and concludes with the following:

If one could observe a language in its various stages of development, one would see how its rules gradually form. But this is impossible. We can thus only observe our language as it is today and attempt to uncover the laws that it follows in the analysis of a thought.<sup>116</sup>

Condillac thus advanced here from the speculative part of his *Grammar*, in which he presented his sensualistic theory of language, to the investigation of an individual language. Did Condillac, while consciously deviating from the external division of the *Grammar* into its two main sections, institute the transition from speculation to "observation" at this point in order to weaken the contrast of the two parts of his *Grammar*? This seems very probable.

In any case, the last six chapters of the first part form a coherent whole with the second part of the *Grammar*. And this coherence emerges from the conclusions advanced in the general theory as it was previously presented. For Condillac began the analysis of the French language by first investigating an entire text in order to discover its constitutive elements, that is, he began with an actual "analysis of cognition" according entirely to the dictates of his theory.

Condillac was aware of the agreement between his theory of language and the inductive method of instruction that sensualistic philosophy demanded. For his explicit goal was not to begin with a definition of grammar and of that "which the grammarians call parts of a sentence,"<sup>117</sup> as this was

characteristic of the deductive procedure of the Port-Royal *Grammar* and its successors.

The consciously inductive practice of proceeding from an authentic text is thus in complete agreement with Condillac's theory and his concept of the "analysis of cognition," and is perhaps the most remarkable aspect of his first approach to the problem of the grammar of a language. One must also emphasize his explicit differentiation between "langage," "langue" and "discours."<sup>118</sup>

By choosing an original text (Racine's address to the French Academy upon the induction of Corneille) Condillac followed his theory of seeing the analysis of cognition in the communicative practice of language, in this case in an authentic text: "the analysis of thought is accomplished in spoken language" ("l'analyse de la pensée est toute faite dans le discours"). The attempt to derive the constitutive elements of language from the analysis of cognition, which is represented by a concrete text, is the practical application of the hypothesis that languages are analytic methods and that the analysis of cognition thus resides in the use of language itself: "To study grammar means to study the methods that human beings follow in the analysis of their thoughts...to observe what we do when we speak;...the system of language is in every human being who can speak."<sup>119</sup>

This analysis of a concrete text with the goal of establishing the various levels of the units that compose it begins by citing parts of the text in order to arrive at the sentence and its structure. After this initial stage, the analysis proceeds to the "elements of discourse" ("éléments du discours"), and these are indeed the traditional categories of words. The second main part of the *Grammar* is concerned principally with these categories. (It has recently been mentioned that in his analysis of the "proposition incise" Condillac arrived at new insights that were not considered in standard grammars until much later.<sup>120</sup>)

But what is the nature of Condillac's analysis of word categories? Their order of appearance agrees substantially with that of the Port-Royal *Grammar*. Condillac began with the noun, which means from a sensualistic perspective that one begins with the assumed order of the development of ideas and their significations, at the beginning of which stand the objects of the first sensations. But the Port-Royal *Grammar* also begins with the noun, although in this case, from a logical point of view, the priority of substance over accidents is decisive, and not the hypothetical order of experience. And, like the Port-Royal *Grammar*, Condillac let the analysis of the adjective follow that of the noun, in order then to proceed to number and gender.

One chapter of the *Grammar* in which Condillac himself pointed out that he came to different conclusions than his predecessors was recently the subject of a study in which the differences in the presentation of the system of signs between Condillac and Beauzée is demonstrated.<sup>121</sup>

In his treatment of the agreement of adjectives with nouns, Condillac again indicated that he was deviating from his predecessors.<sup>122</sup> His analysis

comes to the interesting conclusion that the gender of an adjective can be an expression of a grammatical opposition without referring to some actual sex. Why, for example, in sentences such as “It is dangerous” (“II est dangereux”), should the adjective be viewed as masculine?

Is it not more precise to see here only its first form that, while itself having no gender at all, merely becomes masculine through the opposition to another form which we can give to this adjective and which we call feminine? (N’est-il pas plus exact de ne voir ici que leur première forme, qui, n’étant par elle-même d’aucun genre, ne devient masculine que par opposition à une autre forme que nous pouvons leur faire prendre, et que nous nommons féminine?).<sup>123</sup>

But was Condillac the first to come to this amazingly modern sounding conclusion? Can one assume that sensualistic theory, with its conception of languages as analytic methods, led Condillac to formulate the concept of linguistic opposition?

When Condillac explained the scale on which the prepositions “à” and “de” are used as a progressive abstraction, beginning with the transition from the concept of space to that of time, then this agrees with his principle of “analogy” as the law of development of languages. We saw above that with the aid of this theory Condillac relativized the concept of the arbitrariness of the sign. Locke had also pointed out the progressive abstraction of the meanings of words as an indication of the sensible origin of ideas.

At first glance, one might be astonished at the scant attention Condillac paid to interjections, which seem to stand at a point of intersection with the language of action and articulated phonetic language and about which Condillac even concluded that they “are often equal in value to entire sentences.” The *Grammar* devotes a chapter to them that hardly fills one page.<sup>124</sup> This negligible treatment of interjections as expressions of emotion results, however, from the fact that Condillac was examining a “fully formed and perfected language,” that is, a grammar on the level of fully developed thought, so that the grammatical rules lie on the level of abstraction represented by “sensation transformée.” Condillac thus remained loyal to his sensualistic theory of language when he viewed interjections as words that languages “added to the natural accents of the language of action.” And he said in conclusion: “Grammar has nothing to say about this. It is a matter of feeling to express them at the appropriate moment.”<sup>125</sup> We will see in the following, however, that Condillac also demanded grammatical rules whose flexibility allows sensations to be expressed in linguistic usage.

The two final chapters of the *Grammar* are entitled “De la syntaxe” and “Des constructions.” At the end of Condillac’s analysis we thus find the same subject as in the Port-Royal *Grammar*; but an essential difference becomes apparent in its treatment. The last chapter of the Port-Royal

*Grammar* reads: “De la syntaxe ou construction des mots ensemble,” thus hardly differentiating the meaning of the two terms “syntaxe” and “construction.”

Condillac, on the other hand, adopted the differentiation between “syntaxe” and “construction” proposed by Du Marsais<sup>126</sup> in order to designate with the word “syntaxe” the structure of rules governing the relationships of words to one another, and with “construction” to indicate only word order. But Condillac clearly also deviated from Du Marsais’s standpoint in his interpretation of the problem of word order, and he did so by following his sensualistic theory. The problem of word order was one of the most debated topics of language philosophy during the eighteenth century, and one in which different conceptions of the nature of humanity as a whole were expressed. In the following chapter I will examine the development of this debate and the important contribution Condillac made to the theory of word order.

## 9 Grammar, philosophy, anthropology: the problem of word order

The close connection to philosophical issues existing between the problem of the origin of language and the relationship between language and thought is apparent at first glance. This must be less so for a grammatical subject such as word order. Yet it was precisely the philosophical relevance of questions concerning word order and their significance for sentence structure that made it one of the most widely debated linguistic problems of the seventeenth and especially eighteenth centuries. For it also posed questions pertaining to the relationship between language, thought and reality, and included considerations that were relevant to anthropology as well.<sup>1</sup>

Is an a priori “raison,” or are the “sensations” and the “réflexion” that arises from them, the basis of thought and of its linguistic expression in word order and of the combination of words into sentences? The rationalistic assumption of innate principles of thought and the sensualistic emphasis on experience were thus once more opposed to one another as the means of explaining an important problem of linguistic theory, and it therefore gained great contemporary relevance for the “grammairiens-philosophes.” For a great deal—and not just language theory—depended on whether one decided that the coherence of sentence structure rested on principles of a priori cognition or on cognitive forms that stemmed from sense experience and could therefore vary in concrete communicative situations. These are all questions that, together with grammatical and anthropological problems, also touch on aesthetics and the clarity of language, and thus involved questions of national pride.

An impressive number of the representatives of the Enlightenment, such as Fontenelle, Du Marsais, Voltaire, Condillac, Diderot, d’Alembert, and Rousseau, took part in the debate surrounding the problem of word order after these questions had been raised during the discussions of language in the seventeenth century.

When in 1669 Le Laboureur posed the question whether the great differences between Latin and French word order meant that the Romans thought differently from the French, there was only one answer for him: “raison,” and thus the laws of thought are common to all peoples, “la

raison est de tout pays.”<sup>2</sup> If Latin, as opposed to French, thus had no “logically” substantiated word order, then the Romans must have spoken differently from the way they thought. Latin, that is, could not be a faithful reproduction of their thoughts. This is one example among many that rationalistic philosophy could provide answers even to the problems of word order.

Throughout the eighteenth century the debate over the foundations of sentence structure thus stood in the middle of the arguments concerning Cartesian dualism and its hypothesis of innate ideas. In this way, the question concerning the nature of thought and its relationship to language was raised with respect to word order and intensively debated.

Is one to assume there is a natural model of word order that expresses the a priori laws of cognition, or are the norms of word order the result of a historical development, and thus of experience? And does the communicative function of language demand that a sequence of words agrees with a logical hierarchy of categories of abstract thought, or instead with the intensity of human perceptions and feelings in changeable situations?

The extraordinary relevance of the problems of word order and of the linguistic means of guaranteeing the coherence of sentences thus resided in their implications for the conception of the nature of language, thought, and finally of human nature itself. In addition, the rationalistic premise provided criteria for the evaluation of various languages based on whether those languages agreed with or deviated from a fundamental model of sentence structure that was assumed to be natural.

Since countless differences of word order revealed the conflict between the notion that human thought was universal and the empirical fact that individual languages vary grammatically, the question was raised whether language was even an appropriate instrument for the expression of or perhaps even for the functioning of thought. In the course of the debate about the problem of word order, even political considerations were raised with respect to this question.

In the eighteenth century, insights that now count among the basic assumptions of modern syntax theories arose out of fundamental questions regarding the relationship between the simultaneity of a thought complex and the successivity of its linguistic reproduction in a sentence.

The rationalistic theory of the natural word order of French, which had been advocated in the seventeenth century, formed the point of departure for the later debate: the sequence of thoughts in the act of cognition and of the corresponding parts of the sentence in the act of communication were derived from a hierarchy of logical categories that was assumed to be naturally given. The assumed sequence of subject-verb-object corresponded to the “normal” French sentence structure and was thus seen as an argument for the particular clarity of French.

The source of this argument was the scholastic theory of the *or do naturalist*.<sup>3</sup> Underlying this theory was the assumption that the natural word

order was a reproduction of the hierarchy of logical categories. The subject, the expression of the substance, accordingly had its natural place before the different accidents that were arranged in a particular sequence, namely verb-adverb-object. The precedence of the noun over the adjective was similarly justified. The centerpiece of this theory was the word order of subject-verb-object. Its agreement with the most frequent French sentence type made it possible as early as in the sixteenth century to construct the theory of the "ordre naturel" in French. The seventeenth-century tendency toward standardization and the need to create an apologia for the national language, which was even more pronounced at the beginning of the "Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes,"<sup>4</sup> lent this topic considerable significance. It was further intensified by supporting the postulates of the "ordre naturel" with rationalistic arguments.

The hierarchy of the logical categories underlying the "ordre naturel" was thus explained as being part of the "raison" innate to all human beings. Accordingly, the word sequence of the "ordre naturel" was considered to be an expression of a sequence of thoughts in the cognitive act that was given by nature and independent of time and place. All deviations from natural word order were gathered under the rubric of "inversions."

The categorization of this problem into a dualistic conception made a disregard for the "ordre naturel" appear to be a concession that language itself made to the cognitive forms of the "imagination" and the "passions"; these were triggered by the body and were, therefore, imperfect. And we have already seen what their status was in the linguistic debates occasioned by dualism in the seventeenth century. Within this view, every deviation from the "ordre naturel" was an offence against the clarity of linguistic expression, which could only be achieved to an optimal degree when the laws of non-corporeal thought were followed. The observation of these laws in word order secured for French that clarity which no other language exhibits.

Even in the seventeenth century, the doctrine of the natural sequence of words in French was so widely propagated that the grammars and even the dictionaries that appeared around the end of the seventeenth century, could mention the "ordre naturel" as a truism. Yet as soon as the end of the seventeenth century approached there arose from the debate I discussed earlier about the role of "imagination" in language and the epistemological evaluation of the senses an explicit opposition to the theory of the "ordre naturel," and indeed this opposition came from Bernard Lamy's *Rhetoric*, in the successive editions of which he portrayed the sensuous and physiological foundations of language and thought.

In the first editions, Lamy had remained a committed advocate of the theory of the "ordre naturel." In the definitive edition of 1701, however, one notices the consequences of considering the physiological foundations of thought and language: just as the senses simultaneously receive various impressions and transfer them to the brain, several thoughts also form a

simultaneous whole, or a “painting,” in the “imagination.” Simple linguistic communication demands the analysis of such a complex bundle of thoughts into successive components. Here a psychologically effective association of ideas that captures the attention of the listener becomes the necessary principle of the succession of words. With the aid of this association, the succession of words that is unavoidable in speaking is supposed to be, as it were, compressed in order to achieve the greatest possible assimilation to the complex of ideas that exist simultaneously in consciousness. The freer the word order of a language, the better such an association of ideas can be realized.<sup>5</sup> The strictly standardized word order of French is less a virtue than a necessity that results from the absence of a developed system of inflection. With the aid of Latin inflection, the relationships of words to one another can be expressed much more clearly and engagingly than is possible in French.<sup>6</sup>

Lamy came to refute the doctrine of the “ordre naturel” by way of a primarily theoretical path. We then witness a characteristic protest against the strict norms of French word order in two authors whom we also knew as advocates of a positive valuation of the “imagination” in language: La Bruyère and Fénelon.

La Bruyère, whose lively style attracted a great deal of attention in the eighteenth century, perceived the rigidity of French word order as an enslavement—“on est esclave de la construction”—and he recommended enlivening style by using inversions.<sup>7</sup> In more detailed fashion than La Bruyère, Fénelon, the committed advocate of the “imagination,” also argued for a greater flexibility in French word order. The monotony of French sentence structure excluded any stylistic element of suspense and even often of euphony. This condition of French was, according to Fénelon, the result of an overly exaggerated reaction to the lack of stylistic restraint in the sixteenth century, so that the norms of French word order were an expression of linguistic poverty, aridity, and monotony. Fénelon thus demanded a gradual introduction of new inversions into French, a suggestion that one must see in connection with his *Project for the Enrichment of Language* and that was addressed to the French Academy, which was the highest official authority on such matters.<sup>8</sup>

Fénelon’s ideas about the problem of word order are a further instance of the fact that the debate conducted in the second half of the seventeenth century about the sensuous foundations of language and the arguments about the role of the “imagination” led more and more to a discussion of literary and aesthetic language. Shortly thereafter, the relationship between the poetic character of metric verse and prose was discussed with regard to the problem of word order. The reproach leveled against Fénelon, namely that he did not treat the Telemachus motif in verse, is rejected by one of his supporters with the argument that one can achieve “lively fiction, bold figures, beauty and variation of the pictures” in prose just as well as, or even better than, in poetry. French is, he wrote, already burdened by the cold and dead regularity

of syntax to which Latin was subjected by Northern conquerors, the defects of which were only increased by enforcing rhyme.<sup>9</sup>

The impetus that Fénelon gave to the debate was felt in a subsequent discussion about whether a greater freedom of word order belonged to the essence of poetry. It was a debate in which, once more, advocates and opponents of the rationalistic theory of the “ordre naturel” confronted one another and in which the latter voiced demands for greater freedoms of word order in both poetry and prose by using arguments drawn from the preceding debates concerning the role that the sensuous faculty of representation played in language. In his work, *Agréments du langage réduits à leur principes* of 1718, Gamaches thus justified the rejection of the “ordre naturel” just as much on the grounds of aesthetic motives as in the interest of clarity.<sup>10</sup>

In the following year, Du Bos laid the foundation of a sensualistic aesthetics with the publication of his *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et sur la peinture* and he adopted a standpoint taken in the last edition of Lamy’s *Rhetoric* and which was directed against the “ordre naturel.” Du Bos enlarged upon Lamy’s comments on the advantages of Latin’s free word order and he emphasized even more decisively than Lamy the obstacle the French language faces as a result of its “enslavement to the ‘ordre naturel’.” From the same perspective of sensualistic aesthetics, he rejected Perrault’s intention, which was also based on the theory of the “ordre naturel,” of judging the worth of the literary works of antiquity in translation.<sup>11</sup>

The development of literary aesthetics had also encouraged the “grammairien-philosophes” to consider word order; and it became the subject of a controversy in linguistic theory, in which rationalistic and sensualistic positions were starkly opposed to one another. Locke’s suggestions concerning linguistic theory were certainly not free of contradiction when it came to the problem of word order. His inconsistent sensualism is reflected in the work of such an important grammarian as Du Marsais, who at decisive points in his theory of language and pedagogical writings advocated sensualistic principles and refers to Locke. But he defended the ideal of the “ordre naturel” in his theory of word order. He even expanded it further in several treatises on language pedagogy since his adoption of the theory of the “ordre naturel” was also motivated by his desire to simplify language teaching.

As with the origin of language, when Du Marsais approached the issue of the foundations of word order and wanted to justify his assumption of an a priori cognition existing before language and prescribing its laws, he could refer to Locke’s postulate of the faculty of “réflexion” that existed from the beginning next to “sensation.”<sup>12</sup> Du Marsais’s retention of the theory of the “ordre naturel” thus depended on the possibility inherent in Locke’s system of adjoining it to a rationalistic grammar.

Within a few years, three authors undertook to establish a sensualistic theory of word order in close connection with epistemological and aesthetic

concerns. The inspiration was provided by Condillac's decision to include the problem of inversions in his *Essai*, and he was followed by Charles Batteux who made himself a name in aesthetic debates, particularly concerning literary aesthetics, with his *Lettres sur la phrase française comparée avec la phrase latine* of 1748. In 1751, Diderot replied in turn to Batteux with his *Lettre sur les sourds et muets*.

Condillac's explanation of cognition as "sensation transformée," and as arising from the gradual, mutual development of sensations and linguistic signs, signified a theoretical cancellation of the postulates of the "ordre naturel." Just as he thought that there could be no innate ideas, so too he rejected the postulate of an eternally valid hierarchy of logical categories on which the sequence of thoughts and words depends. His sensualistic perspective also refuted the apriorism of the word order problem by including a historical and genetic view. As the product of progressive abstraction from the original language of gestures and sensation, language and cognition do not remain static in this development; the same is true of word order. Originally, the sequence of signs was governed by the intensity of human sensations and thoughts, which were reproduced by language and triggered by the environment. The most intensive sensation was placed at the beginning of every statement. Phonetic language, however, enabled increasingly higher forms of cognitive abstraction. New standards of word order thus developed in the same manner.<sup>13</sup>

Language does not stand still in this process. With Latin word order, there is an historical intermediate stage between the earlier form of the language and that of modern French. The more strictly standardized French word order is a result of the higher form of abstraction in the thought and language of the French. This development belongs to the very essence of language. Latin and French word order are thus both seen as natural.<sup>14</sup>

The historically motivated rejection of the "ordre naturel" theory by categorizing it within the sensualistic conception of the development of language and thought was complemented by a sensualistic explanation of the way language functions on a synchronic level: Condillac replaced the rationalistic "ordre naturel" with his notion of the "association of ideas," ("la liaison des idées") as the principle that combines the parts of speech into a whole. The "liaison des idées" fuses the sentence and, beyond that, the entire text through the most immediate spatial sequence of the parts that are intellectually unified. Condillac built here on the physiologically oriented arguments that Bernard Lamy had already expressed as a counter-argument to the "ordre naturel": just as the senses simultaneously perceive a multitude of impressions, so too do several ideas form, according to Condillac, a simultaneous whole representation in consciousness. The linguistic communication of ideas demands, however, the translation of simultaneity into a linear order. Since there is no a priori hierarchy of intellectual categories, there also exists no standardized sequence for the linguistic expression of ideas. The closest possible connection of the ideas that belong

together, as well as the degree of interest in the individual thoughts, is decisive for the communicative intention. In this process, the “liaison des idées” is the linguistic reproduction of the connection perceived between the things. Whether one says “Darium vicit Alexander” or “Alexander vicit Darium,” in both cases the “liaison des idées” is guaranteed by the verb standing between the subject and object. The association of ideas is realized in a different manner according to the specific means available to a language, so that a different linguistic structure stipulates a greater or lesser freedom of word order.<sup>15</sup>

In later writings on linguistic theory, in his *Grammaire* and the *Art d'écrire*, Condillac emphasized that the expression of sensations and interests that are specific to certain situations is also possible in French by changing the normal word order and, by observing the “liaison des idées,” this does not adversely affect clarity. Rather, the precision of language even demands that it express interests that are particular to certain emotions and situations as components of the communicated ideas. Sensation is just as much a part of the essence of humanity as is abstract thought. Thus it must also be reflected in linguistic expression in order to make it exact and complete.

The flexibility of word order thus has a dual function: it guarantees clarity and expressive force, both of which are inseparable stylistic qualities. In view of all of the differences in word order, then, the “liaison des idées,” which is not restricted to any particular sequence of the parts of a sentence, remains the basis of intelligibility.<sup>16</sup>

Seen from the perspective of rationalistic grammar, the principles of thought, which are the same for all human beings, could make it seem that the variations in the expression of ideas lacked rules since these variations could only have an emotional origin. In opposition to this view, the sensualist Condillac attempted to formulate the rules governing differences in thought and language as arising from the differences caused by variable circumstances.

Condillac thus erased the dividing line between grammar and the emotional use of language. As the most important law of any communication, the “liaison des idées” is the foundation of both sober and emotional utterances, and the emotional word order does not need to employ any additional, irregular means beyond the “liaison des idées.”

The expression of emotion thus no longer stood in constant conflict with the norms of word order in French grammar, a conflict that had caused so many heated debates. There was no longer an unbridgeable chasm between emotion and a grammar conceived along sensualistic premises, nor was there an unmediated opposition between “sensation” and “réflexion” in Condillac’s sensualism, for the explanation of thought as “sensation transformée” cancelled the contradictions in which the rationalistic dualism between spirit and matter had been expressed on a grammatical plane: namely the immediate opposition between the rational and the emotional, the

contradiction between the grammatical norm deduced from logical premises and linguistic reality.

“Sensation” was just as much a part of the essence of humanity as the thought that arose from it. Language must therefore reflect the impressions that human beings receive thanks to their sensibility. “Idée” and “sentiment,” rationality and emotion belong together in linguistic communication and complement one another. Their sequence in different communicative situations will thus vary according to the strength of the impression made by various ideas, and this flexibility of word order makes it possible to express “idée” and “sentiment” simultaneously.<sup>17</sup>

It is precisely language that provides constant evidence that our thought only first emerged from sensation; it can never deny this origin. For even if humanity did develop “réflexion” with the aid of language, then it must also have retained its sensibility, which had to have been reflected in language. The conformity of one’s manner of speech with the subject of a conversation and with the perspective of the speaker always proves anew that we have a sensibility that allows us to receive and process impressions in the first place. “We are never completely calm because we are sensible; and calm is nothing but a smaller motion. In vain do people believe that they can free themselves from these laws—everything in us is an expression of feelings.”<sup>18</sup>

To be “affected” or “not to be affected” by an object is thus not a fundamental, but rather only a gradual difference. And no other difference exists between the manners of speaking that conform to respective situations. If therefore the norms of language cannot ignore the expression of emotions, then style has to unify correctness with the force and “character” of expression. The regularity of facial features and expressions do not cancel one another out, they are combined with one another. Style is like a face whose regularity corresponds to grammatical correctness and whose facial expressions correspond to the power of expression. If personal inability stands in the way of the combination of correctness and power of expression, and if one has to choose between the two, then the power of expression is the most important!<sup>19</sup> No other conclusion was possible from the sensualistic standpoint.

None of the positions taken up in the debate about inversions shows so strikingly as this sensualistic theory of style—presented in great detail in Condillac’s *Art d’écrire*—that the sensualistic view of the problem of word order placed the individual and the concrete in opposition to the abstract categories informing the “ordre naturel.”

Human beings adopt different relationships to their surroundings because of their sensibility, or their respective ways of seeing and perceiving things (“la manière de voir et de sentir”). Their thought and language orient them toward the world in which they live, and not according to a priori norms of cognition. And the variations in linguistic expression, and thus also in word order, are a reflection of the differences in the things humans perceive.<sup>20</sup> The “liaison des idées” remains intact and, since it is the reproduction of the

connection between the feelings and thoughts triggered by things, it is at the same time the reproduction of our perception of the connection between the things themselves.<sup>21</sup>

In its individual characteristics, as well as in its place within the history of philosophy, Condillac's theory of word order is thus an expression of the concern that stood at the center of the philosophical interests during the Enlightenment, namely to place human beings in an immediate relationship to reality by excluding all metaphysical intervention.

In his *Grammar*; above all in his *Art of Writing*, Condillac took ideas into consideration that he had encountered in Diderot's *Lettre sur les sourds et muets*,<sup>22</sup> this had been, in turn, based on Condillac's own *Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines*. Diderot's *Lettre* represents an important stage in the development of his aesthetics, and at its center lay philosophical and aesthetic questions connected with the problem of word order.<sup>23</sup> Indicative of the significance of this topic for Diderot was the fact that he composed the *Lettre sur les sourds et muets*, which appeared in the same year as the first volume of the *Encyclopédie*, in a period of extreme tension.

In addition, the title must have seemed to be a challenge to the authorities, since Diderot's *Lettre sur les aveugles* of two years before had led to his prosecution and arrest. Friends of Diderot thus attempted—in vain—to prevent him from publishing this new *Lettre*, for they were also concerned about the imminent appearance of the *Encyclopédie*.<sup>24</sup> Diderot apparently believed, and rightly so, that, as opposed to directly posing the basic question of philosophy as he had done in the *Lettre sur les aveugles*, his sensualistic reflections on the problem of word order and its bearing on philosophical and aesthetic issues would not cause any serious offense.

The title of the work refers to Diderot's suggestion that one investigate the sequence of ideas in gestural language by examining the gestures of deafmutes, and thereby determine the succession of ideas in the act of communication that was not influenced by phonetic language.

But Diderot expanded this topic to include detailed considerations of general aesthetic and philosophical problems about the ways ideas and feelings can be expressed, a set of problems that always absorbed him.<sup>25</sup> Without rejecting Condillac's postulate of a constitutive role of language in thought, Diderot emphasized the often perceptible distance between the intensity of thought and its linguistic expression. The continuous use of words leads to a kind of erosion of meaning and effect and thus also blurs the "sensations" and "images" that were originally associated with them. In this manner, linguistic usage makes out of words a sort of unit of exchange that is used in everyday routine. In place of the traditional opposition between "usage" and "raison," Diderot arrived in this way at an opposition of "usage" and "sensation."<sup>26</sup>

The appropriate linguistic expression for thoughts and feelings must therefore be continuously sought as far afield as possible. As Condillac had done in his *Essai*, Diderot therefore concerned himself in his *Lettre sur les*

*sourds et muets* with the means of expression in the various arts. The origin of language, the language of gesture, pantomime, the expressiveness of prosody, music, painting and sculpture are thus brought into a complex connection with the conflict between the simultaneity of ideas and their linear means of expression in language. He considered and partially elaborated on important arguments from the earlier debate concerning the problem of word order.

Several contemporary commentators of the *Lettre sur les sourds et muets* believed that it mainly treated the problem of word order, whereas others thought that this issue was merely a pretext for excursions into the areas of metaphysics, poetry, eloquence, music, etc.<sup>27</sup> In reality, it was an ensemble of philosophical, linguistic, and aesthetic problems that were associated with one another in Diderot's mind, and he had been inspired to investigate artistic expression in this complex, panoptic fashion by the debate about the problem of word order. D'Alembert said about "this so often debated matter of word order" that "most difficulties about which philosophers are not in agreement stem from the fact that these questions implicitly involve several others, for which each awaits a solution."<sup>28</sup> Instead of systematically searching for the solution to each of these various questions, Diderot wanted to show how difficult and complex the problem of word order is, and he said himself that he would lead the reader through a labyrinth.

Diderot addressed the letter to Batteux, but he indicated that he could just as easily have addressed it to Du Marsais or to Condillac. Yet Diderot was concerned precisely with correcting several of Batteux's theses according to the point of departure he shared with Condillac. First of all he mentioned the absence of the historical perspective that Condillac had so greatly emphasized, and that, by neglecting it, Batteux had been led to proclaim yet again an unbridgeable opposition between sensation and abstract thought and thus between the word orders that correspond to these two spheres.

Diderot thus began by claiming that Batteux had overlooked the fact that a solution to the problem of word order must take into consideration how languages originate and develop. Diderot then adopted Condillac's thesis concerning the sequence in which signs form at the original stage of the development of languages. After designations first come into being for the objects that particularly impress themselves on the senses, the "qualités sensibles" are then differentiated from one another and given their proper designations. Most adjectives correspond to this latter group. Only after this stage did people abstract from the "qualités sensibles" and find different common characteristics among the objects such as impenetrability, extension, form, and so forth, and in this way abstract concepts were formed and given their names. Later these concepts became absolutized and seen as actually existent beings, whereas the sensuously perceptible qualities were viewed as accidents and adjectives made subordinate to nouns. But in fact the adjective,

as the expression of the “qualité sensible,” ought to receive precedence so that the “original” sequence of words would place the adjective before the noun.<sup>29</sup> In this respect, Diderot’s sensualistic consistency thus went beyond Condillac’s *Essai*, whose hypothesis treated preposed or predicate adjectives as natural even at the beginning stage of phonetic language.

In order to verify the hypothesis concerning the original word order, Diderot proposed the systematic study of gestural language, in which he proceeded from Condillac’s assumption that the language of action, as a pre-stage of phonetic language, also determined its initial word order. A first possibility of the analysis of gestural language would be experiments with people who agreed to act mute (“muets de convention”). A “muet de convention” has the advantage of being able to explain why he places certain ideas earlier or later in the sequence of his gestures. The fact that such an experimental person is capable of speech can, however, lead to a dangerous source of error: Diderot remembered Condillac’s comments on the role language plays in thought when he remarked that the sequence of gestures in a “muet de convention” might possibly be determined by his linguistic habits.<sup>30</sup>

For this reason, one could find only in deaf-mutes a true gestural language that one could say with absolute certainty is not influenced by linguistic prejudices. Their sequence of ideas would have to be that of the early stage of humanity before the formation of phonetic language. Diderot’s hypothesis concerning word order in the origin and development of phonetic language and his observations on gestural language led him to the conclusion that French exhibits numerous variations when compared to the original “ordre naturel.”

Thought and language have since their origin experienced such a deeply embedded mutual development that it is hardly possible to determine a particular natural order of thoughts. The sensuous faculties of perception vary from individual to individual and thus cannot provide any standard or norm for the complex connections between thoughts in completely developed languages. In addition, human beings do not always have in a conversational situation the same point of view, so that even the sequence of their thoughts will vary. The desire for rules governing word order therefore leads to the formation of syntactic norms that Diderot designated, as opposed to the original “ordre naturel,” as “ordre d’institution, ordre scientifique, ordre grammatical” or “ordre didactique.” The necessary basis of such syntactic norms is thus abstract thought, since sensations and interests vary from person to person and from situation to situation. But common to humankind is the process of abstraction from sensuously perceived objects that the imagination and reflection allow. The distance from the original “ordre naturel” that results from sense perception is thus a factor of the development of language and thought toward ever higher forms of abstraction.<sup>31</sup> Like Condillac, Diderot thus used the hypothesis of “sensation transformée” to explain the problem of word order historically.

This revelation of the historical perspective led Diderot to a seemingly brilliant idea: should the categories established by Aristotle have played a part in the strict determination of French word order? In any case, Diderot thought, they can also be found here, and, at the time when the originally much freer word order of French became subjected to strict norms, the Aristotelian doctrine dominated French education.<sup>32</sup> In this hypothesis, categories of “réflexion” that arose from “sensation” again took the place of categories derived from a timeless “raison.”

In his aesthetic interpretation of the problem of word order, Diderot went beyond Condillac’s *Essai* in so far as he emphasized the annoying discrepancy between the simultaneity of a bundle of ideas and feelings and the linearity of its linguistic reproduction. Human beings would actually need twenty simultaneously speaking mouths to reproduce the multiplicity of their “sensations.”<sup>33</sup>

From Condillac’s conception of the analytic role of language in thought, Diderot derived the thesis that language gives us the illusion of a distinct sequence of thoughts, namely that of their linguistic reproduction. This decomposition of sensations and thoughts into their individual components has the effect, however, of weakening them. The “picture” of sensations and thoughts in the soul is broken up into brush strokes and loses its original character. Lamy’s and Condillac’s theory of the ideal word that has the expressive force of an entire sentence therefore leads Diderot to the theory of the “poetic hieroglyph.” He understood by this term any linguistic means of expression that allow one to do justice to the simultaneity and intensity of feelings and thoughts. This can occur by appealing simultaneously to different senses, as well as by using a kind of figurative language that is directed toward the imagination—a procedure that Diderot propagated in both theory and practice—and also by means of onomatopoeia. Thus the poetic hieroglyph consists in the simultaneous appeal to different organs of sense and in the related arousal of a number of sensations and thoughts.<sup>34</sup>

The phrase “ut pictura poesis,” which was the epigraph of Du Bos’s *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et la peinture*, is taken to its extreme by Diderot here in that he attempted to overcome the discrepancy between the simultaneity of thoughts and sensations and the linearity of discourse. This question, which sensualistic thinkers had placed at the heart of the problem of word order, then received yet another answer from Lessing in his *Laokoon: or on the Limits of Painting and Poetry* of 1766, in which he emphasized precisely the successive manner of representation in language as the specific quality of literature as opposed to the simultaneous manner of representation in painting.

The debate concerning the problem of word order was continued in the years following Diderot’s *Lettre sur les sourds et muets*. Works that expressed positions for and against the sensualistic or rationalistic conception of the problem followed fast on one another. Two of the official grammarians of the *Encyclopédie*, namely Du Marsais and his successor

Beauzée of all people, reacted negatively to the sensualistic theory of word order that was gaining the upper hand. In the *Encyclopédie*, which was after all edited by Diderot, Beauzée criticized the *Lettre sur les sourds et muets*.<sup>35</sup>

Du Marsais's article in the *Encyclopédie* on "construction" (1754) is directed primarily against Batteux, but it is also, although less directly, a response to Condillac and Diderot. His conception of the "ordre naturel" remains the same as in his first didactic works, despite his consideration of opposing arguments. In place of two types of word sequence, he distinguished between three, since in addition to the "natural" and "figurative" he mentioned the "usual" word order, which is a mixture of the first two. It occurs the most frequently in actual linguistic practice. With the introduction of the "construction usuelle," Du Marsais took instances into account in which French word order often fails to observe the "ordre naturel." Du Marsais wished to prove that the "construction naturelle" was the foundation of all linguistic communication. In order to secure this thesis, which he had already presented in his first works, Du Marsais provided a significantly more detailed argument so as to respond effectively to the objections raised by his opponents.<sup>36</sup>

Since the existence of cognition is assumed to be independent of language, the first communication of ideas makes it necessary to connect them with certain signs, to give them "extension," and thus to embody them so that they can be perceived by the senses. In this process words have only a communicative, not a cognitive, function. The idea is a whole that is dissected into individual parts and embodied as words only when it is transformed into language.

The connections between the parts of cognition, which are created in this process and exist simultaneously, are reflected in the connections between words and, since words are after all physical signs, they of necessity have to be expressed in language on a spatial plane, that is in the order of the words. In his characterization of these connections, Du Marsais proceeded from the traditional theory of the "ordre naturel." The subject, as the expression of the substance, must precede the various accidents: it must precede its action, for "prius est esse quam operari," as well as precede its modification, for a real or only imagined existence is the precondition for the attribution of qualities. The dictum "prius est esse quam sic esse" had already served as a justification of the "ordo naturalis."

Reduced to grammatical terms, the realization of these rules reveals the priority of the governing word over the governed one, of the modified or determined over the modifying or determining; a conclusion that was also occasioned by the theory of the "ordo naturalis."

Du Marsais had thus brought the simultaneity of a complex thought, one of the most important objections levelled against the theory of the "ordre naturel," into agreement with his rationalistic explanation of word order and he even used Condillac's thesis of the analytical function of language to this end, although not without fundamentally altering it. In Du Marsais's hands,

Condillac's conception of the cognitive function of language became a purely communicative function serving to express thought that is independent of language. In order to render a thought completely, the word order must correspond to the logical laws governing the analytic decomposition of the thought, since in this way the intellectual connections between words are most easily recognized and unify the individual parts of expression for the reproduction of the totality of the thought. This last aspect shows again that he borrowed from Lamy and Condillac, both of whose theories, however, are used to advance a rationalistic argument.

Du Marsais also sought to invalidate the objection that language only gradually develops and that the "construction naturelle" did not originally exist. Certainly, at the origin of language a "métaphysique d'instinct et de sentiment" was at work, but the grammarians, he argued, made certain that language followed the laws of cognition. Once again, we find that the defense of the rationalistic theory of word order was not conceived in opposition to Locke, but very definitely in opposition to Condillac. Deviations from the natural word order, as they are made in the "construction figurée" and the "construction usuelle" for the expression of the "imagination," "passion" and individual interest, would make communication unintelligible if the listeners could not reassemble the "construction naturelle." And speakers also have to be conscious of the "construction naturelle" even when they deviate from it.

For Du Marsais, only those phenomena of word order that belong to the "construction naturelle," either to its observation or to making it apparent, fall within the realm of grammar. Its principles are just as universally valid as the principles of thought, for which he saw language solely as the expression, are common to all human beings: "Since all human beings think and attempt to communicate their thoughts through language, the order in which we speak is everywhere the same, and that is a further reason to call it 'natural'."<sup>37</sup> The differences between individual languages can consist only in the specificity of the respective modality in which the universally valid order is expressed. The arbitrary character of this difference exists outside the realm of grammar, for which the laws of cognition provide the foundation.

The differences in word order between individual languages thus rest on the various ways in which the emotions are expressed. There exists therefore no common rule for the "construction naturelle" and for the deviations from it that the "construction usuelle" makes possible. To be sure, the "construction usuelle" has to stay within the boundaries that allow the "ordre naturel" to be recognized, but otherwise it is arbitrary. This zone of arbitrariness is the actual realm of rhetoric. Rhetoric can move freely and with impunity as long as it remains within sight of the "construction naturelle," which is to say of grammar. There are no rules for rhetorical freedom with word order, because there is no fixed order for individual interests and emotions.

Du Marsais thus excluded the grammatical classification of the psychological elements of word order, such as accentuating elements by preposition, that had been emphasized in sensualistic theories. The only thing that is important is that even in a different order the same words express the same basic thoughts (“le même fonds de pensée”), the understanding of which the recognition of the “construction naturelle” presupposes.

Du Marsais’s reputation as a grammarian for the encyclopedia added substantially to the positive reception of his doctrine of word order. His opponents, however, among whom Batteux was the most active, did not remain silent. After Du Marsais died in 1756, Beauzée inherited his post on the staff of the *Encyclopédie* and he began to defend and broaden the scope of his predecessor’s theory of word order. Beauzée adapted a substantial part of his article for the encyclopedia for his extensive *Grammaire générale* of 1767.

It is characteristic of Beauzée’s rationalistic stance that he viewed the anonymous author of the *Letter on Deaf-Mutes* just as much an opponent as he did Batteux, and that he saw the most dangerous objections against his own theory in Condillac’s arguments concerning word order.<sup>38</sup>

Beauzée even went beyond Du Marsais’s views and expressed the rationalistic theory of word order even more pointedly, for example in his conception of the relationship between general grammar and the grammar of individual languages. The principles of the former are unchangeable and universally valid since they arise from the nature of “raison,” which is always and everywhere the same. In the grammar of individual languages, on the other hand, there are only hypothetical truths because their principles depend on arbitrary and changeable conditions under which the conventional signs of thoughts are used by the members of the respective linguistic community. In his rationalistic consistency, Beauzée went so far as to claim that general grammar existed before any languages did. Only the grammar of an individual language comes into being after language as such exists. It is gained through observation of the “usage” in the individual languages and by comparing it to the principles of general grammar. He thus viewed the general laws of language as being independent of individual languages.<sup>39</sup>

Beauzée’s conception of the bases of word order is just as radically rationalistic. Based on Du Marsais’s theory, Beauzée viewed “natural” word order, which he called the “construction analytique” or, more frequently, the “ordre analytique,” as the precondition of all communication. Beauzée preferred to use the phrase “ordre analytique,” which illustrates that he was concerned with the way the laws of the analysis of thought are expressed: the indivisible cognitive act, as a non-corporeal process, is analyzed according to logical criteria for linguistic communication in order to make it accessible to the senses as words. The relationships of the words to one another have to correspond to the relationships of the individual components

within the cognitive act that arise from the nature of that very process. In this way the “*ordre analytique*,” which is the expression of the “*raison*” common to all people, also provides the laws of syntax independent of time and place and valid for all conceivable languages.<sup>40</sup>

If analogous languages directly indicate the “*ordre analytique*” through the sequence of their words, and, on the other hand, if transpositive languages give words their inflected endings, which have the value of “*place cards*,” then this basically means that the “*ordre analytique*” is being followed equally in both cases.<sup>41</sup> Its coercion is so apparent that not a single word may leave its designated place without bearing some notation that indicates what its natural place is.

Beauzée also continued along the path marked out by Du Marsais in his arguments against Batteux, who had opposed grammar to rhetoric. Batteux, he claimed, had attempted to make a secondary task of language, namely the expression of interest, the “*imagination*,” and the “*passions*,” or in other words he had tried to make the concerns of rhetoric the measure of word order. With that, Beauzée went on to say, Batteux substituted inconstant sensations, “*impressions reçues*,” with unchanging cognition, the “*coeur*” with “*esprit*,” and rhetoric with grammar. By far the most important task of language, however, is the mere communication of thoughts. Grammar, he argued, could therefore only be the expression of the invariable nature of thought. Grammar and rhetoric are directed toward two areas that exclude one another.

From this perspective, Beauzée protested against Batteux’s interpretation of variable word order in the two statements found in Livy and Cicero of “*romanus sum civis*” and “*civis romanus sum*.” According to Batteux, the first of these emphasizes the quality of the Roman on the basis of the given situation, the second that of the citizen: the first phrase was uttered by a Roman in the face of death to the enemies of Rome and thus explains his attempt to kill their leader. In the second, a crucified Roman addresses his fellow citizens. For Beauzée, however, both formulations express the same thought that is rendered in the same syntax. For, owing to their inflectional endings, both formulations are allowable. Harmony or coincidence may have been the deciding factor in the choice of the one or the other word order.<sup>42</sup>

Just as characteristic is Beauzée’s response to Condillac’s and Diderot’s historical explanation of the problem of word order and their notion that the model of word order in modern languages arose out of an historical development. From the beginning the “*ordre analytique*” must have already served the first human beings as the foundation of communication since no communication would have been possible otherwise. In response to the sensualistic portrayal of the gradual formation of language and cognition, Beauzée wrote that the first human beings would not have needed to develop the “*ordre analytique*” for the simple reason that it could not have been a human creation. We have already seen Beauzée’s position in favor of the divine origin of language.

The refutation of the historical arguments brought forth by Condillac and Diderot against the theory of the “ordre naturel” seemed from the rationalistic perspective to be a self-evident conclusion. But Beauzée perceived a threatening objection in Condillac’s attempt to make the “liaison des idées” the basis of word order in place of a logically substantiated hierarchy and sequence in the parts of a sentence. But here too Beauzée returned to his basic thesis that the liberties of word order that were made possible by observing the “liaison des idées” were only allowable because their derivation from the “ordre naturel” remained recognizable.<sup>43</sup>

Beauzée once more expressed the rationalistic foundations of his theory of word order in his *Grammaire générale* in a phrase that rejected all of the sensualistic objections raised during the eighteenth century. There can be no external determinants for pure thought, which was the basis of all languages:

the analysis of thought is the work of the pure understanding; and the invariability of the original prescribes unchanging rules for the copy,... without differences of time, place, climate, and language: “raison” is at all times and everywhere the same for all languages.<sup>44</sup>

Batteux provided the most extensive sensualistic response to Beauzée,<sup>45</sup> in which he adopted various important arguments from Condillac and Diderot. Batteux asked again to what extent the word order of French, which must observe a fixed order due to the absence of noun inflection, can be declared to be “natural,” and whether Latin, on the other hand, whose free word order offers innumerable possibilities, has made the constant deviation from nature its principle.

Batteux seized upon Du Marsais’s assertion that Latin inflected endings were proof of the fact that, when the Romans began with an object, they first thought of the verb and, before the verb, of the subject, and Batteux simply turned this notion around. It is correct, he said, that the beginning words in a sentence that are in the accusative case presuppose a verb; but it is just as incontestable that a verb standing at the beginning of a sentence presupposes an object. There is therefore no hierarchy of the parts of a sentence that arise from the nature of thought itself.<sup>46</sup>

In consciousness, the component parts of the cognitive act stand in a simultaneous relationship to one another just as the parts of a painting relate to one another. If the simultaneity of the thoughts expressed in a sentence thus excludes the existence of a temporal succession in the consciousness of the speaker, then the closest possible connection between individual thoughts and their degree of intensity remains the principles governing the sequence made necessary by language. Batteux thus adopted Condillac’s principle of the association of ideas and combined it with his hypothesis that word order depends upon the degree of interest accorded to the individual ideas within a sentence. The motives, whose influence on word order Batteux opposed to the “ordre métaphysique,” are now, as “sensation” and “impression,”

contrasted to the abstract categories of substance and mode, which can only be known by a scholar—that is by a minority within the larger linguistic community—but not by the people who create the language. Interest is more important than logical categories to the same degree that sense impressions are more intensive than instruction—two things which Du Marsais had not distinguished.<sup>47</sup>

Batteux understood by interest all individual motives that cause humans to speak and that, according to the perspective of the speaker, give this or the other thought greater intensity. He developed his thesis in several chapters according to the following basic principle: “The natural word order results from the respective importance of the objects in a conversation” (“L’arrangement naturel des mots est réglé par l’importance des objets”).<sup>48</sup>

Batteux had certainly Condillac and Diderot to thank for the thesis that he had not as yet clearly expressed in his first work on word order, namely that the “ordre métaphysique” was a belated creation of abstract thought. Condillac’s and Diderot’s influence is undoubtedly present in Batteux’s sketch of a history of grammatical theories of word order,<sup>49</sup> which was a reply to Beauzée’s assertion that the problem of inversion had been the same for all grammarians of all languages at all times. In a fashion very similar to Diderot’s approach in his *Lettre sur les sourds et muets*, Batteux referred in his introduction to the necessity of investigating the origin and development of language in order to clarify the problem of inversion. After he cited examples taken from Condillac concerning the formation of the first types of words, Batteux advanced the thesis that a part of the particles used to identify person, mode, and various grammatical relationships such as pronouns, articles, prepositions, and conjunctions, gradually merged into other words. In languages that have pushed this process especially far, one observes the development of systems of conjugation and declension; but in other languages the majority of such particles remains independent of one another so that an actual system of inflection can never coalesce. In contrast to languages with a complete system of inflection, this second category of languages, to which French belongs, therefore had to regularize word order in order to use it to express grammatical relationships.<sup>50</sup>

Only long after Greek and Latin had been handed down through mere linguistic usage, grammarians had applied metaphysics to language in order to systematize the learning of language. The necessary didactic simplification led to the abstraction of certain norms from the plurality of the actually occurring word orders.<sup>51</sup>

In direct connection with this circumstance, Batteux came to a conclusion that expresses the fundamental opposition between the sensualistic and rationalistic conception of language—one could also say between sensualism and rationalism in general—in a phrase of unsurpassed simplicity and clarity: “Soon thereafter, the grammarians, who had constructed their rules on the basis of the language that had been handed down to them, arrived at the belief that their rules must be Nature herself from which the formation of

language arose.”<sup>52</sup> The position of his rationalistic opponents is thus reduced to the fateful error of the human mind to lend after the fact an a priori and eternally valid character to its own abstractions. The grammarians, Batteux went on to say, clung undeterred to the rules they had constructed even though they did not conform to the diversity of linguistic reality. Thus it could occur that Demosthenes’ and Cicero’s sentences were characterized as being “unnatural” because they did not correspond to the rules of the scholastic tradition.

When in modern times languages such as French finally appeared whose word order did conform to metaphysical norms, the confusion of the grammarians reached an even greater pitch. National prejudices were added to the grammatical ones, and people began to believe that the syntax of one’s native language was the basis of all other languages.<sup>53</sup>

The counter-arguments to Beauzée’s rationalistic exaggerations thus led Batteux to go one step beyond Diderot and Condillac and, in addition to language, caused him to view even grammatical theory as the product of a historical development. The rationalistic theory of word order that had become the object of historical investigation was therefore deprived by yet another argument of its claim to general validity: sensualism revealed that the rationalistic theory of word order rested on the fatal tendency of the human mind to absolutize its own abstractions and afterwards to view them as a priori principles.

In the years following the controversies just outlined, d’Alembert, Voltaire, Rousseau, and again Condillac entered into the debate surrounding the problem of word order. In 1766, when the debate approached its climax, Herder appropriated the positions of Diderot and Condillac.<sup>54</sup> Before then, the dispute had already found an echo in Johann Christoph Gottsched.<sup>55</sup>

When the Berlin Academy of Sciences then posed the prize question for the year 1784 concerning the reasons for the universality of the French language, Rivarol’s prize-winning response once more made the rationalistic conception of the “*ordre naturel*” into the centerpiece of the argument in which he claimed that the unequalled clarity of French was the cause of its universality.<sup>56</sup>

The sensualistic objections were not able to diminish the understandable attraction of the theory of a natural word order. In fact, all available evidence seemed to speak in its favor. No theory was better suited to support the contention of the superiority of the French language. In addition, it was, despite everything, so flexible that one could affirm it without necessarily being an advocate of the doctrine of innate ideas. Indeed, one could accept the “*ordre naturel*” and remain a follower of Locke, as we saw in the case of Du Marsais.

Even Voltaire announced his support for the theory of the natural word order of French. He saw in the opposing position doubts about the clarity of French, a clarity that he saw as springing from its natural sentence structure and that contributed to the pre-eminence of French literature. In Voltaire’s

view, the theory of the “ordre naturel” thus offered an instrument for propagating Enlightenment ideas, which possessed an incomparable clarity and effectiveness in the form of the French language.<sup>57</sup>

After all, despite their rejection of the principles of the “ordre naturel,” Condillac and Diderot had also seen in the regular construction of French the guarantee of its special clarity, at least with respect to the expression of abstract ideas. Thus Rivarol could base his arguments at least in part on those of Condillac and Diderot. To be sure, at the center of his work he relied on rationalistic theory, as for example when he mentioned that the agreement of French word order with the natural order of ideas was a justification of the universal role played by the French language. In what is perhaps the best known anthologized piece from his *Discours sur l'universalité de la langue française*, Rivarol, in a manner entirely consistent with rationalistic theory, contrasted French word order, which he saw as an expression of “raison,” with the unregulated sentence structure of other languages, in which the “sensations” and “passions” predominated.<sup>58</sup>

The advocates of sensualistic theory, for their part, did not hesitate to mount a counter-attack. It was probably no coincidence that already at that point, namely a few years before the French Revolution, criticism of Rivarol’s rationalistic theory began to assume political overtones. The most important critical pronouncements against Rivarol that appeared in 1784–5 came from Jean-Charles Thibault de Laveaux, Dominique Garat, and Urbain Domergue. Several years later, Laveaux became an active proponent of the Revolution, particularly as the chief editor of the *Journal de la Montagne*. As of 1795, Garat, one of the leading “Ideologues,” taught at the “Ecole Normale” after he had been Robespierre’s Minister of Justice; Urbain Domergue made a name for himself during the years of the Revolution as a “grammairien-patriote.” Rivarol, however, had emigrated during this time after having been branded a royalist.

Laveaux’s criticism of Rivarol’s rationalist arguments links him with the rejection of the climate theory which Court de Gébelin had used shortly before to explain the different characters of languages. Laveaux opposed this account to a social explanation: the language of a nation is enriched in a way that is proportionate to the extent of its ideas, and the ideas can only increase its store of ideas through freedom. Religious despotism, supported by its comparable political manifestation, stultifies people more than the climate or poverty.<sup>59</sup>

As Condillac had taught, language for Laveaux could only be clear when it reproduced the different emotional modifications of ideas; this is only possible with the aid of a flexible word order. A language whose monotone sentence structure cannot express the diversity of feelings thus has the least precision and clarity.

Laveaux then went beyond Condillac’s and Diderot’s explanation of French word order as the product of a development toward a higher plane of abstraction in thought and language when he interpreted the monotony of

French sentence structure as the result of the enslavement to which the people had been subjected by the various rulers of Gaul and France.<sup>60</sup> The allusion to the despotism reigning in France since the seventeenth century had already been very clear when in 1750 Algarotti concluded with regard to French norms of word order: "Grammatical rules became all the more strict the more absolute the form of government became."<sup>61</sup>

Garat, too, rejected the notion that an unchanging natural word order provided the basis of the clarity of French. Criticism of Rivarol seemed to him to be all the more necessary in that he had borrowed several aspects of Condillac's conception of the mutual dependence of language and thought. Garat registered this discovery by Condillac as a decisive advance over Locke, whose doctrine had still allowed one to view thought as being independent of language. Even Euler, Garat wrote, had followed Condillac when he emphasized the necessity of language for cognition.<sup>62</sup>

Garat's profession of his faith in the sensualistic theory of language drew attention to the study of languages as a source of knowledge about the nature of the human mind.<sup>63</sup> In so doing, he again made the opposition evident between the sensualistic conception of the mutual relationship of language and thought and the rationalist absolutizing of cognition:

It will come as no surprise that the most important discoveries about the nature of the human mind were made precisely in the study of grammar and the principles of language. They could occur there and only there, for only in languages could we observe how our ideas are formed and communicated. There one finds the entire human mind, and it exists nowhere else. The philosophers were extremely foolish to have wanted to create grammars, logical and metaphysical systems, all of which were already contained within languages themselves. They would only have needed to observe language correctly to find them; but they did not want to observe, they wanted to create; and if one wants to create without having observed, then one only arrives at dreams and absurdities.<sup>64</sup>

In grammar, just as in other realms, the sensualistic standpoint thus demanded observation instead of metaphysical speculation.

And as concerns French word order, Garat asked: why has its ostensible agreement with the natural order of thoughts not prevented the fact that, often enough, style is opaque in French? The clarity of a language does not depend, he responded, on an unchanging sequence of thoughts, but rather on their meaningful arrangement and on the choice of the correct words. Languages with a developed system of noun inflection and a correspondingly free word order have twenty possibilities to express an idea clearly. Languages subject to the "ordre direct" are, on the contrary, bound to a very particular word order to achieve clarity and thus have twenty possibilities of unclear expression.<sup>65</sup> Garat's criticism of Rivarol was thus primarily based on Condillac's *Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines*.

Domergue's response to Rivarol was largely inspired by Condillac's *Art of Writing* and its demand to view the expression of emotions as an essential element of communication.<sup>66</sup> Domergue had published his response to Rivarol in 1785 in the *Journal de la Langue Française*, which he had founded and which ceased to appear in 1788. But in the Revolutionary years 1791 and 1792, Domergue once again arranged for the publication of this journal under the same title. Full of patriotic zeal, he wanted to help give the French people a language that was worthy of their newly-won freedom. It is no surprise that Domergue also took up the criticism of Rivarol once more. His objections of 1785 were now augmented by arguments that stem partly from his experience of the Revolution and partly from the theoretical arsenal of the Ideologues. Domergue's *Grammaire générale analytique* of 1799 begins with the words: "Human beings feel and think." The sensualistic slogan "la sensation et la réflexion" had by then become, in altered form, the motto of a grammatical theory. Even with respect to the theoretical foundations of word order, Domergue combined the experience of the Revolution with the conclusions derived from the sensualistic explanation of thought as "sensation transformée": How is a word order, which one can call "natural" and which corresponds to "raison," supposed to be in conflict with the "sensations"? Are perhaps the "sensations" something unnatural? Can they exist in opposition to "raisonnement" if the latter is comprised of "sensations"? The clarity of French consists in the unequivocal nature of its words, Domergue argued, not in its regulative word order. The clarity of a language is also partly determined by the expression of passions and sensations. The Revolution, Domergue claimed, had shown that genuine "passions" completely agree with "raison." Passions such as the love of freedom and the hatred of tyranny are demanded and governed by "raison." Did, he asked, the language of a Mirabeau, which was filled with revolutionary passion, possess no clarity when it enflamed the hearts of patriots?<sup>67</sup> At the same time as he pilloried the grammarian Rivarol, he was thus condemning the royalist emigrant and notorious enemy of the Revolution.

With regard to the universality of the French language, Domergue wrote that it will in future be called upon to extend its role to an even greater degree thanks to the irresistible power of attraction that the first free people on earth will exert on all other nations. The "grammairien-philosophe" Domergue had truly earned his new title of "grammairien-patriote."<sup>68</sup>

With this political aspect, the confrontation between purely philosophical issues in the theory of grammar thus acquired an additional dimension. Soon thereafter, Louis-Sébastien Mercier, who in his *Néologie, ou Vocabulaire de mots nouveaux* of 1801 viewed the lexical enrichment of language as an expression of political freedom, wanted in the same spirit to propose a treatise on the new legitimate freedoms of French word order.

Yet the assumption that a connection existed between the freedom of word order and political freedom, as we have witnessed it in Laveaux, Domergue and Mercier, could not long go unchallenged. Louis de Bonald

soon took possession of the arguments that could be derived from the rationalistic theory of the “*ordre naturel*” for the use of Restoration ideology. For de Bonald, the natural form of the state for any given nation was reflected in the fixed norms of word order. The lawless “barbaric constructions,” however, to which the beautiful and noble regularity of French had had to give way during the Revolution, were a result of the revolt against the natural political regime. As opposed to the sensualistic theory, the hypothesis of a fixed natural word order proceeded from an essentially static view of language and could therefore provide political conservatism with arguments for the defense of the existing order both in society and in language.

In the concluding chapter, I will return to the issue of locating the Enlightenment debate on the problem of word order within intellectual history.

## 10 The origin of language and the historical view of humanity

In this chapter I will discuss, above all, those aspects of the Enlightenment debate on the origin of language which relate to social theory. Yet these questions often cannot be separated from the problems associated with the natural sciences and anthropology that stand in the center of the next chapter on “Language and evolutionary thinking.” Some overlap is therefore inevitable. In this and the following chapters I will refer to what I had already elaborated with respect to Locke and Condillac in order to give prominence to the contribution of sensualism to the subjects treated in their respective chapters.

Descartes’s emphasis on articulated phonetic language as the external characteristic of human beings in contrast to animals was instrumental in placing the origin of language and the “language” of animals within the circle of interest surrounding the debates about human nature and its place in the universe. In addition to the discussion unleashed by Cartesianism about the existence or non-existence of intellectual and communicative faculties in animals, during the second half of the seventeenth century the question concerning the origin of language was raised within the framework both of historical Biblical criticism and the doctrine of natural law, and it thus took shape within a specific early Enlightenment context.

For the famous, or rather infamous, founder of historical Biblical criticism, Richard Simon (1638–1722), it was hardly possible to harmonize Lucretius’ description of the natural origin of language, as well as the views of the Church Fathers on language origin, with the account in Genesis of the divine bestowal of language on humanity. And Bernard Lamy, who like Richard Simon was a member of the Order of Orators, stood in precarious proximity to his fellow member of the order in the question of the origin of language. Similarly, from the perspective of natural law, Pufendorf (1632–94) accorded more space to Lucretius’ portrayal of the human creation of language than to the one found in the text of Revelation. In the eighteenth century, the debate about the origin of language acquired the greatest relevance when the conflicts engendered by Enlightenment philosophy reached their climax.

The hypotheses set forth during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries

about the origin of language can be arranged according to a rough classification within three main groups:

- 1 supernatural inspiration of language in the first humans;
- 2 language as creation of human beings equipped with fully developed cognitive capacities;
- 3 common origin and development of language and thought in the course of the history of humanity.<sup>1</sup>

The Biblical myth of creation admitted several variations of the assumption of a supernatural inspiration of language in the first human beings. A modern, multi-volume *History of the Opinions concerning the Origin and Diversity of the Languages of Peoples*<sup>2</sup> offers an enormous amount and variety of material on the interpretations of a supernatural creation of language and of the Babylonian confusion of languages.

The hypothesis that language arose as the work of human beings who were already equipped with fully developed cognitive capacities offered an explanation for the origin of language that was admissible both to rationalists as well as to sensualists of Lockean persuasion. It was also possible to ensure agreement with a religious world-view by basing the assumption that human beings possessed a cognitive faculty on the intervention of some supernatural force. In both the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, this hypothesis was propagated in various forms.

In the seventeenth century, thinkers once again entertained ideas that had already been voiced during antiquity concerning the notion that human beings had developed language themselves. After Condillac had enlarged upon this hypothesis and fashioned it into a supporting element of his sensualistic system, the question of the origin of language gained increasing importance in the debate about a new historical view of human beings and of society as a whole.

In the following, I will trace the development of this problem from the beginning of the seventeenth to the end of the eighteenth centuries and, in so doing, discuss only some of the particularly significant views put forward in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, especially since during this time new efforts were being devoted to the investigation of the origin of language.<sup>3</sup>

The philosophical orientation of Bernard Lamy's *Rhetoric* also pushes the problem of origins into the field of vision. The difficulty of offering a philosophical solution that conformed to the Biblical view of the world already posed questions that would dominate the eighteenth-century debate. Lamy's basically rationalist position remained intact when he raised the hypothetical possibility that only through their first encounter with one another and the beginnings of social life were some humans induced to create a language in order to communicate their thoughts to one another. People thus assigned designations to ideas regardless of whether it was a

matter of ideas about things that, as objects of sense perception, stemmed from physical experience, or of first truths that were independent of experience and innate in every person. The ability to generalize enabled people to give the same designations to the same things. The differences perceived in things were expressed by corresponding changes in the designations.<sup>4</sup>

Lamy was, however, conscious of the lack of orthodoxy in his hypothesis, for he added a chapter in which he corrected the “fable” of such a human creation of language and presented the “true origin” of language. The chapter begins with a reference to the problem of faith contained in the hypothesis of a natural origin: “If what Diodorus of Sicily has written about the origin of language were true, then what we have said about the formation of language in those new human beings would not be a fable, but the truth as well.”<sup>5</sup> This is followed by Diodorus’ explanation of the natural origin of language, which, as Lamy emphasized, he took “from the Greeks” and which begins with the natural origin of life and of human beings:

Soon after the waters had receded into the ocean, the moist earth was warmed by the sun and brought forth human beings and the other animals. Although they at first lived in scattered isolation, humans learned, through the experience of the advantages of a common life, to defend themselves from animals. In the process, they first used elementary linguistic means of communication, which they continuously perfected in order to designate and communicate everything what came into their view. The differences between the languages came about in that many such societies, each of which developed its own language, formed in several places on the earth.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, the Biblical account of creation is contradicted here at every point, including the problem of the polygenesis or monogenesis of language.

Lamy then contrasted Diodorus’ hypothesis with the Biblical story of creation, according to which God gave the first human being a language that Adam’s descendants spoke until the building of the tower of Babylon. God then gave every family its own language, which then also underwent its own development after people had dispersed over the entire globe. As a result, the original linguistic communities split up and formed new idioms, so that finally more languages came into being than had existed after the failed attempt to build the tower of Babylon. Lamy’s orthodox disavowal of his own hypothesis of a natural origin of language thus attempts to unite the monogenesis of human language, which was demanded by the thesis of creation, with a natural explanation of the diversity of languages.

From several of his statements it becomes plainly evident that this orthodox retraction was actually supposed to appear in the first main section of the *Rhetoric*,<sup>7</sup> where the hypothesis of the natural origin of language had its place from the beginning. But it is added at the very end of the work,

and only in later editions did he place it where he had originally intended it to be located. The most plausible explanation for this would be that Lamy only belatedly saw the occasion to write this correction of his hypothesis of the natural development of language, that is after the manuscript of the work had already been completed or even was already in press, so that its addition at the end of the work was the only possibility left open to him.<sup>8</sup>

In the following editions, this retraction is in the first part of the *Rhetoric*, but Lamy's depiction of the hypothesis of the natural origin of language still precedes it. This is no minor matter, especially since in the intervening period the appearance of Richard Simon's *Histoire critique du Vieux Testament* of 1678 had caused a sensational scandal. In his work, Simon had contrasted the natural human creation of language, supported by numerous citations of ancient authorities, with the text of Genesis.

Simon cited Aristotle, Epicurus, Lucretius, and Diodorus of Sicily, whom Bernard Lamy had mentioned, in order to refute the assumption of a divine creation of language, which was a view he saw as the result of a one-sided interpretation of Genesis, as well as to counter the analogous thesis in Plato's *Cratylus*.<sup>9</sup> To avert suspicion of heresy, he placed Saint Gregory of Nyssa in the same series of authorities. According to Gregory of Nyssa, God neither caused the Babylonian confusion of languages, nor did he create a language for the first human beings. Was God perhaps a grammarian who invented a language and taught it to Adam and Eve? God had created things; words are the work of human beings. God had given them the natural cognitive capacity for creating them. Because the manner of thinking is not the same for all nations, there is therefore a multiplicity of different languages.<sup>10</sup>

Human beings certainly had only one language as long as they all lived together. After God's will had scattered them over the globe, however, languages changed in different ways so that different designations of things arose, although people actually agreed in their knowledge of them. Thus God is only indirectly the cause of the diversity of languages.<sup>11</sup> Simon thus saw the development of language as part of the natural development of humanity.

Under the protection afforded by citing these theses by a Church Father, Richard Simon then gave Diodorus of Sicily a hearing, accompanied by quotations from Lucretius. According to Diodorus, humans first uttered spontaneous sounds that meant nothing, but from which they finally developed articulated phonetic language by using their understanding to express their thoughts. The impetus of this development was the human need for communication and the necessity to invent new words as new things were being discovered. This was a conclusion which was substantiated by Lucretius's phrase "utilitas expressit nomina rerum." It is no surprise that during the construction of the tower of Babylon people had enormous difficulties making themselves understood to one another, since there was a large number of things that needed to be done for which there as yet existed no name and which each person thus had to designate in his own way.<sup>12</sup>

Simon therefore suggested a natural explanation even for the tradition of the Babylonian confusion of languages.

As against the narrow interpretation of Genesis that portrayed humans conversing with God immediately after their creation and that made Eve capable of dialogue with the serpent, Richard Simon prided himself on the fact that his natural explanation of the origin of language in no way contradicted the story of creation:

I have explained the origin of language in an entirely natural fashion and I have simultaneously brought this explanation into agreement with the story of creation. If Adam and Eve had been brought into the world with a finished language that they handed down to their descendants, then the absurd conclusion would have to be drawn from this that the serpent would have to have done the same.<sup>13</sup>

The explanation of the origin of language was just as much a topic of interest for the doctrine of natural law as it was for Biblical criticism. Several years before the appearance of Richard Simon's work, Pufendorf had already dealt with this problem in his fundamental study *De jure naturae et gentium* of 1672.<sup>14</sup> The significance of communication for the knowledge and realization of natural law caused Pufendorf to treat human obligations in the use of language. Beginning with a theory of signs, in particular their separation into natural and institutional ones, whereby gestures and the signalling value of certain things also belonged to both groups, Pufendorf arrived at the characterization of language as the primary instrument of communication in human society. In his description, there were some important attempts to define the essence of language by considering its origin and its institutional character, which in Pufendorf's arguments underscored the social character of the contents which are constituted by and communicated in language.

Pufendorf's reflections on the origin of language also focused on the problem of conceiving it either as a social institution created by humans, or as stemming from divine inspiration. He quoted extensively from Lucretius' description of the origin of language as arising from the needs of people living in society. But he also mentioned Lucretius' observation that it is entirely natural that human beings invented words for the designation of their ideas about things, since even animals, without possessing human organs of articulation, have the ability to express their sensations with cries.

Pufendorf pointed out that Lucretius was apparently arguing against Plato's transcendental explanation of language. And he expressly stated that Lucretius' theory of the origin of language presupposed that the first human beings arose from the earth and differed only slightly from the other animals and, at that first stage, also lacked language.<sup>15</sup>

He mentioned only very briefly the authority of the Holy Scripture. On the basis of it, "most Christians believe" that the first human beings had received a language directly from God himself. Yet he subsequently relativized this

reference just as much as the tradition of the Babylonian confusion of languages when he said he took it to be certain that most languages were very simple in the beginning and were only gradually enriched and perfected, and otherwise underwent such fundamental change that their dissolution or their commingling produced entirely new languages.<sup>16</sup>

The tendency to interpret the problem of the origin of language in a secular fashion could not, of course, go unchallenged. The *Traité des langues* by Frain du Tremblay, a contributor to the *Journal de Trévoux*, exhibits an effort to “resacralize” the issue.<sup>17</sup> He was the one who first asked the question, which was later often repeated, how it was supposed to have been possible to invent a language without being able to speak, since one cannot manufacture eyeglasses without being able to see. He thus argued that language must be a divine gift. Pluche also aligned himself with the same thesis even within the general framework of his effort to justify the sensualist method of language instruction in *La mécanique des langues et l’art de les enseigner* of 1752. To be sure, Pluche had previously been reprimanded because of an earlier encyclopedic description of nature, *Le spectacle de la Nature*, in which he also treated language but had not sufficiently emphasized the role of God as creator.<sup>18</sup>

Is it therefore any surprise that despite the extensive discussion of language in the *Essay concerning human understanding* the origin of language as a problem lay beyond Locke’s horizon? I have already indicated that Locke’s sensualism and his hypothesis that reflection existed at birth could be harmonized with the Biblical account of the origin of language. Locke even placed an explicit reference to Genesis in his *Essay* at the very beginning of his chapter on language:

God having designed Man for a sociable Creature, made him not only with an inclination, and under a necessity to have fellowship with those of his own kind; but furnished him also with Language, which was to be the great Instrument, and common Tye of Society.<sup>19</sup>

Locke thus outlined here—without entering into the question any further—the complexity of the implications that every hypothesis of the origin of language could have, for in this short passage we already see mention of religion, humanity, and society. One probably ought to view the assumption, which was apparently self-evident to Locke, that language originated from a supernatural provenance as an expression of agreement with Locke’s postulate of an a priori cognitive faculty and not as a response to authors such as Pufendorf, Richard Simon, and Bernard Lamy.

Without adopting Locke’s reference to the Bible, Du Marsais did presuppose, like Locke, the existence of “concevoir,” that is of reflection, in addition to the faculties of “voir,” “sentir,” etc. that are present from the start, and he thus saw in language an instrument of communication that was subsequently created and formed by an independently existent cognition<sup>20</sup>—

an assumption that, as we have already seen, appeared in theories of word order that were proposed as an alternative to Condillac.

Condillac's hypothesis of the origin of language, which was an essential component of his theory of "sensation transformée," was of even greater consequence for the view of humanity and society (but also for several aspects of scientific notions of development), than it was for grammar theory. In the years following the appearance of Condillac's *Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines*, that is to say, at the time at which the most intensive ideological debates about sensualism were being conducted, Diderot, Maupertuis,<sup>21</sup> Turgot<sup>22</sup> and Rousseau<sup>23</sup> all expressed their opinions about the origin of language under the influence of Condillac's hypothesis, as did Adam Smith<sup>24</sup> and Monbodo<sup>25</sup> in England. At the Berlin Academy of Sciences, the development of language became the subject of a long controversy and finally of a highly publicized prize contest, about which I will say more below.

In addition to anthropological elements, every contemporary theory of the origin of language also contains considerations of the origin of society, at least as concerned the sequence in which society and language developed, but also as it pertained to the nature of the human species at the beginning of human history.

The dilemma of this particular debate arose from the awareness of the mutual dependence of language and society. From this came the assumption that the forms of human society and of the human species (as being fully equipped with cognitive faculties), must have come about as the result of supernatural creation before language was "invented," or rather, as even Locke had said, that linguistic and social capacities can be traced back to a common act of creation. Even this postulate was able to open perspectives on the interdependence and common development of language and society, even though it mainly occurred through the prism of Biblical tradition, such as the Babylonian confusion of languages or the fundamental assumption that language and society had distanced themselves from an ideal original condition.

Condillac's sensualistic explanation of the origin and the mutual development of language and thought within the framework of his theory of "sensation transformée" also included a consideration of society within this genetic approach and thus placed it in a new historical view of development. For in Condillac's hypothesis, the origin and development of language and thought are directly tied up with the genesis and development of society as a whole. At first, the rudimentary forms of society, elementary intellectual capacities, and means of communication are all mutually contingent on one another. Social life both demands and enables the constant betterment of intellectual and communicative faculties. The needs of human beings in relation to their environment act as the general impetus in producing the dynamism of society, human intellectual capacities, and language. Society, fully formed human cognitive faculties, and language are thus the results of

history, and the human community creates them in a continuous process of historical experience.<sup>26</sup>

When, in his *Grammar*, Condillac corrected his own earlier terminology and rejected the characterization of linguistic signs as arbitrary in order to emphasize their artificial or institutional character, he was concerned precisely with underscoring the profoundly social and historical nature of the linguistic sign. Arising in a long process from the original use of natural signs, artificial or institutional signs represent an entirely new, historically achieved stage of the sign. And it is by virtue of their artificial or institutional character that they mark the boundary between human cognition and both instinctive sign use and instinctive behavior. For it is the case that spontaneous, natural movements or sounds produced by both the human and animal languages of action are also arbitrary with respect to their meaning. The conscious use of artificial signs, however, enabled human beings to rise above merely spontaneous reactions to sense impressions. The control humans have over their power of representation with the use and combination of signs is thus the basis for the constant compounding and combination of ideas: that is to say, for the development of creative thought as well as for its communication.<sup>27</sup>

In this way, the level of cognitive and communicative function which human phonetic language achieves makes the historical dimension in the development of humanity possible. For, thanks to language, human beings, as opposed to animals, can establish a historical dimension to their lives. In the case of animals, the learning process always begins anew with each generation at the same stage and thus does not allow for any development that goes beyond the status of the individual of the species.<sup>28</sup> By virtue of our possession of language, the human species, on the other hand, can accumulate and pass down a body of knowledge in the form of social experience from generation to generation and in this way enable the progress of human civilization as a whole. Condillac broadened the anthropological view of language as the instrument allowing the intellectual faculties to unfold within the individual to include language as the precondition for the historical development of society at large. Condillac understood the history of human society, like language and thought, as the work of human beings themselves.

Finally, this description (which was substantiated by linguistic theory) of the transition from the state of nature to the level of culture led Condillac to a consideration of the genesis and development of the arts. New social needs caused new requirements of communication and knowledge to arise, the realization of which enabled, in turn, a development toward an increasingly complex social existence. This, then, resulted in new and greater needs and means of communication, which include aesthetic considerations that come into play in the various arts that are based on the function of the sign, ranging from the pictorial arts to literature. Condillac thus included the semiotics of these arts in his *Essai sur l'origine des*

*connaissances humaines* while also approaching it from a historical point of view.<sup>29</sup>

I have already indicated that the sensualistic hypothesis of the origin of language received a pronounced push in the direction of social criticism in Rousseau's *Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité*, which, according to his own testimony, he had been inspired to write after reading Condillac's *Essai* (again following Condillac, Rousseau also composed an *Essai sur l'origine des langues*, which, however, appeared only posthumously in 1781). Rousseau's decidedly critical stance toward social inequality lent his linguistic theory, which Condillac had presented in predominately epistemological terms, a radical political emphasis.<sup>30</sup>

He adopted Condillac's hypotheses concerning the role language plays in the development of thought and in the transition from the state of nature to the state of culture. Yet, in so doing, he replaced Condillac's notion of the relatively harmonious course that the development of humanity takes with his own distinctive emphasis on the social contradictions that deform both society and the individual and result in the constant conflict between the social nature of human beings and their social existence. Rousseau thus consciously placed language theory, anthropology and sociology in an immediate connection with one another, which allowed the sensualistic anthropological view of the common development of society, language, and thought to merge into a revolutionary interpretation of history.

Rousseau argued emphatically against the doctrine of natural law that uses the socialized and civilized individual of modern society as a point of departure. At their primitive stage, humans are "stupid and dense animals" ("animal stupide et borné"<sup>31</sup>), who as such are led by their need for self-preservation to social union and thus to the first, elementary forms of communication. Rousseau described the formation of social human beings in accordance with Condillac, but he deduced a historical explanation and radical critique of social inequality from the sensualistic concept of the development of language and thought.

In order to trace the genesis of social relations from their origin on, Rousseau described a savage ("homme sauvage") as a being who lived either entirely alone or within the family unit and who communicated by using unarticulated sounds, gestures, and mimicry, and whose intellectual reactions were reduced to the perception of sensuous impressions and animal-like instinctive reactions. Only when climatic conditions necessitated survival did the formation of bands of people occur for undertaking a joint search for food. Forming sounds was the instrument of what was at first still a primitive and concrete communication, which nevertheless stimulated social action and blazed the trail for the later development of thought.<sup>32</sup> Rousseau derived the formation of what were initially elementary concepts, which corresponded to the first social bonds and dependencies, from the effect of the passions, which have their origin in our desires or needs. Rousseau followed Condillac as well in his conclusion that social needs, language, and

thought develop in a process of interaction.<sup>33</sup> Only the interaction of the development of needs and communication enabled us, in a very long historical process, to make the transition from mere sense perceptions (“pures sensations”) to simple knowledge (“simples connaissances”).<sup>34</sup> In every phase of their development, therefore, language and thought correspond to the historical level of development of the society as a whole.

In this way, Rousseau’s description differed from the attempts to explain social inequality by appealing to natural law, in which concepts from ethics, theories of property, and power were applied to the beginnings of the development of society.<sup>35</sup> One would not have hesitated to use the concepts of “justice” and “injustice” to describe this phase of the development of humanity, but without asking what meaning they could have had then. And one spoke of the “natural right of every person to preserve that which belongs to him” without ever explaining the word “to belong” (“appartenir”). It is similarly preposterous to ignore that stretch of time that had to pass before the meaning of such words as “government” (“gouvernement”) could exist among human beings at all. By projecting modern concepts onto the dawn of humanity, Rousseau argued, modern philosophers had in reality transferred their own image of civilized human beings onto the natural state.<sup>36</sup>

Rousseau’s socially and historically informed attempt to emphasize the problem of the origin of language by aligning it with the question of the genesis of social inequality underscored the social and historical character of ethical concepts as well as of social distinctions and of the way they come into consciousness. As a result of the development of society, they have a reciprocal effect on social behavioral patterns and cognitive forms.<sup>37</sup> Unarticulated expressions of sound served, although they initially existed to fulfil the elementary needs of existence, to characterize the relations between the members of an evolving society by expressing the first notions these people had about their interdependence.<sup>38</sup>

Next to the multiplicity of social relationships and of individual sensations, which develop gradually over time, a language simultaneously develops whose spontaneous and metaphorical character corresponds to a level of thought that is still predominately concrete. Hunting, herding animals, and the cultivation of land, or the stages of production that successively follow upon one another, therefore represent levels in the socialization of human beings and in their capacity for communication. The intellectual progress connected with these stages enables a gradual acceleration of development, for it makes the use of tools possible and the gradual linguistic stabilization and standardization of moral relationships.<sup>39</sup>

Since language enabled human beings to consolidate their knowledge and communicate it from one generation to another, complicated technologies were finally developed that also enabled the cultivation of land and the processing of metals. Running parallel to the increase of technical knowledge, language allowed ideas to begin to form in which social

differences became conscious, differences that arose from the cultivation of land and from the increasing division of labor.

The cultivation of land created the conditions for social inequality to arise gradually, which was expressed linguistically by the idea of property, and this linguistic designation thus became an important instrument of its stabilization and propagation. By manipulating language, those people who first appropriated land were gradually able to form the idea of property and to make it a determining norm of social life. Rousseau emphasized, at the same time, that the formation of the idea of property also occurred during a long historical process and in various stages, all the while moving toward increasing degrees of abstraction. Rousseau's well-known formula, that the person who first fenced in a piece of land and proclaimed it to be his property was the person who laid the foundation stone of social inequality, is merely an allegory for a process that Rousseau expressly saw as a gradual historical development. The formation of the idea of property originated in the protracted, continuous cultivation of land, in the course of which the claim to the products of work gradually began to include a territorial claim.<sup>40</sup> Only the knowledge that was handed down over many generations by using language was able to form such an idea conceptually and thus make it into the expression and instrument of social relationships.<sup>41</sup> Ideas such as "authority" and "government" could similarly be formed and made into regulators of coexistence by using language only to the extent that a social need for these ideas arose.

Rousseau saw the variations between individual languages as being based on the change of their function from mediums for the communication of individual sensation and thought to instruments of stabilizing social distinctions and finally of political antagonisms. The decline of the natural character of language, which was originally the immediate expression of sensations and ideas, follows a course parallel to that of social development, which grows increasingly distant from the original equality of human beings. As an instrument of domination and deception, it now becomes the instrument of the dissimulation that people use to obscure their actual behavior and thought.<sup>42</sup>

Thus, at a time when the "Affaire de Prades" was still fresh in everyone's memory, Rousseau went considerably beyond de Prades's sensualistic conclusion about the human and institutional origin of ethical concepts. The inclusion of Condillac's thesis of the origin of language thereafter became the point of departure for a radical sensualistic social criticism.

Although, in France, Diderot, Maupertuis and Turgot all expressed their opinions about the origin of language soon after the appearance of Condillac's *Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines*, the explanation of the common genesis and development of language and thought received its most enduring expression in Rousseau's anthropological work, which he radicalized in his social theory, so that Condillac has usually been given less

credit than he deserves as the actual author of the sensualistic hypothesis of language origin.

I already indicated that Adam Smith and Monboddo, among others, took up the theme of the origin of language in England, while, in Germany, it reached a climax in the prize question issued by the Berlin Academy of Sciences. In the following, I will discuss the prelude to this prize question because, although it throws an important light on the reception of the sensualistic discussion of language and on the related debates in Germany, it was neglected for a long time.<sup>43</sup>

I have already mentioned Maupertuis's mediating role at the Berlin Academy. In response to a paper that Maupertuis had read, J.-P.Süßmilch gave a lecture in 1756 that was later published under the title: *Attempt to prove that the first Language received its Origin not from Human Beings, but from the Creator alone*.<sup>44</sup> By consciously forgoing a merely apologetic argument, he attempted to refute the thesis of the human origin of language on the basis of its own demonstration. In so doing, he appealed to the already traditional argument, albeit in a more detailed form, that, without language, reason was unthinkable, and, without reason, no language was thinkable. Language could therefore not be a human invention, nor could it be the result of a gradual process of genesis.

In the same year in which this response to the sensualistic thesis of language origin was presented, the German translation of Rousseau's *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* appeared. Moses Mendelssohn had translated Rousseau's essay at the suggestion of Lessing, with whom he had often talked about the difficult subject of the origin of language.<sup>45</sup> Without endorsing Rousseau's political radicalism, Mendelssohn completely concurred with the natural explanation of language as having been a human creation. Human beings did not even need a fully formed reason for the first steps in the creation of language in Mendelssohn's view, but rather "nothing more than imagination and the ability to make oneself more perfect."<sup>46</sup> Thus here, too, the sensory imagination takes on the role that had been attributed to it in the previous discussion concerning the formation of human linguistic and intellectual abilities.

The opponents of the sensualistic thesis of language origin did not remain idle, however. One was Formey, who, as the perpetual secretary of the Berlin Academy, strove to preserve the legacy of Wolffian rationalism. He first reacted to the sensualistic thesis of language origin with a lecture, followed by the publication of the text in 1763, which he characteristically added as an appendix to his rejoinder to Rousseau's just-published *Emile*, in which Rousseau had dressed his sensualistic theory of education in the form of a novel. Formey wanted to corroborate Süßmilch's thesis of the divine origin of language and he went so far as to point out the danger that the sensualistic explanation of language origin paved the way to materialism. In the process, he did not shy away from mentioning Condillac by name, just as the title of his rejoinder in general alludes to

Condillac's *Essai: The primary Means for discovering the Origin of Language, Ideas and Knowledge*.<sup>47</sup> In 1766, finally, Süßmilch published his defence of the divine origin of language in an expanded version of his original lecture with an appendix that discusses Rousseau. He found an ally in the author of an essay with the characteristic title: *Numerous Conjectures on the oldest Condition of Humanity* of 1766, which argues against Mendelssohn's thesis (which he adopted principally from Rousseau) of the natural genesis of language.

In France, too, the thesis of the human origin of language provoked renewed opposition. It again becomes apparent that a monolithic ideological position was by no means always represented in Diderot's *Encyclopédie* when we consider that within the same volume, and separated by only a few pages, two different authors wrote the articles on "langage" and "langue," one of whom presented the natural origin of language and the other defended the divine creation of language and society. Both appeared in the ninth volume of the *Encyclopédie*, which was published in 1765. The article "langage" was written by the Chevalier de Jaucourt, who relied on Condillac. The author of the article "langue," on the other hand, was Nicolas Beauzée, who soon thereafter, in his two-volume *Grammaire générale* of 1767, viewed the supernatural creation of language as the only possible explanation of its origin.<sup>48</sup>

In France, as in Germany, and in particular at the Berlin Academy, the sensualistic thesis of language origin was thus being subjected to intense criticism in an ideologically polarized debate when, in 1769, the academic prize question was posed: "Could human beings, left to their natural capacities, have been able to invent language? and by what means would they have best arrived at this?"

A record number of responses—thirty in all—were received. Herder,<sup>49</sup> who won first prize, had already been interested in this problem for several years; he had discussed it with Goethe and he had known Condillac's *Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines* as early as the mid-1760s. Even then he had fundamentally assimilated Condillac's view that language was a purely human creation. In his prize-winning treatise he made his objection to Condillac more precise, that thought and language could not have simply developed from the level of sensations and spontaneous, natural, expressions of sounds that animals also possess. Before his detailed treatment of the issue in the prize-essay, Herder had already formulated his conception of language and thought as the product of a mutual development in the course of the history of humanity. In his *Fragments on Recent German Literature* of 1766–8 and in the *Critical Forests* of 1769 he viewed language as the great "container" in which many generations of humanity had stored their thoughts. Herder had also been influenced in his assumption of an interdependence of language, thought, and society by the Academy treatise by Michaelis, which dealt with the interdependence of language and thought.

Before he wrote the prize-essay, Herder had also argued against the divine origin thesis that Süßmilch had again proposed. He accused Süßmilch of lacking the “spirit of history” and thus an understanding of how language could only be explained as a historical product of development in the course of the entire history of humanity.<sup>50</sup> And in the field of aesthetics, Herder had let his indebtedness to French sensualism be known toward the end of the 1760s when he emphasized the importance of sense experience for both aesthetic judgment as well as for the formation of the understanding.

After the preceding debates and protests against the blurring of the fundamental difference between human beings and animals, the first sentence of Herder’s prize-essay has a provocative effect: “Even as animals, human beings possess language.”<sup>51</sup> Yet Herder meant by this phrase the spontaneous expressions of sounds that human beings and animals both produce with their bodily organs. Condillac had included the forms in which immediate feelings are expressed (which animals and humans share) under the rubric of the “language of action,” and he had portrayed the human articulated phonetic language as having gradually grown out of this language of action. Herder’s criticism of Rousseau and even more of Condillac is directed against their hypothesis that the human faculties of cognition and communication were a higher development of the same characteristics that animals also possessed. In this respect Herder did not see the origin of language and thought as being located in the sensibility common to both human beings and animals or in the reactive sounds that are triggered by this shared sensibility.

The basis of the creation and development of language that human beings alone possess is, rather, what Herder called “reflection” (“Besonnenheit”), an expression that even at that time was seen as his own neologism. Herder used it to designate the intellectual ability that human beings possessed from the beginning of their existence. “Besonnenheit” is also, he said, “connected with a certain organization of the body” and thus rests on sense activity, but it is characterized from the start by the consciousness and intellectual activity that differentiate human beings from animals, namely the “entire economy of their sensate and cognitive, of their cognitive and volitional natures.”<sup>52</sup> The higher development of this faculty comes about as the result of the historical operation of processing sensate experience in combination with the development of language.

Herder thus appropriated Locke’s dualistic sensualism instead of Condillac’s radical explanation of thought and language as “sensation transformée.” But he did adopt the phylogenetic notion of development that Condillac emphasized as being the actual fulfillment of Locke’s sensualism. For while Herder’s concept of “Besonnenheit” is an a priori capacity, as such it is also an elementary intellectual faculty that only unfolds in the course of the subsequent evolution of language and thought, which Herder viewed as the actual essence of humanity. In this regard, Herder agrees with

Condillac's explanation of the mutual determination of language, thought, and society in their historical development.

In 1784, the German translation of *Lord Monboddo's Work on the Origin and Development of Language* appeared, which Herder had arranged and for which he furnished an introduction. Herder could not have characterized his own interest in language any more accurately than he did with the words in which his "introduction" sketched out Monboddo's enterprise: "The origin and progress of language, as he views it, is not speculation about grammar, but a philosophy of humanity and of the dark reasons for which human beings became what they are."<sup>53</sup> Monboddo, like Herder, was concerned about knowing what, in the development of human beings, was "the work of God" and what was "the work of human beings." And Monboddo also located the genesis of language at such an early stage that language, society, and humanity all appear to be the work of human beings themselves.

Although Herder distanced himself from Monboddo's opinion "that apes and humans are of one race,"<sup>54</sup> his argument ran on two opposing tracks. For, by appealing to the discovery of comparative anatomy that shows "that apes are not capable of creating language even with respect to the organs they possess," Herder traced our linguistic ability back to our "organization," that is, both to our physical organism and to human society: "Apes and other animals are incapable of attaining either reason or language perhaps not because of an essential lack in their soul, but because their present organization differentiates them from us."<sup>55</sup> Herder thus also saw the basis of language and thought in the physical nature of humanity, which in this way was included in the universal context of nature. But at the same time, Herder allowed human beings to step out of this context because of their perfectibility and the historical experience of the human social being, which gradually allows the highest forms of intellectual faculties and activity to develop from the co-operation between language and thought: "Thus human beings came to all the arts on the path of language. Language and language alone enabled perception, recognition, memory, appropriation, a chain of thoughts, and thus, through time, the sciences and arts were born."<sup>56</sup>

As a component of his historical view of humanity, Herder's conception of language, which closely parallels the one put forward by proponents of Enlightenment sensualism, was certainly involved in his answer to a question he asked himself: "What can human beings form?" Herder responded: "Everything. Nature, human society, humanity."<sup>57</sup>

Despite Herder's fairly moderate sensualistic position, his historicized perception of humanity and society also answers to the judgment that the Restoration levelled against the Enlightenment, namely that by denying the divine origin of language and explaining human society as the work of human beings themselves, it prepared the way for upheaval and revolution.<sup>58</sup>

# 11 Language and evolutionary thinking

After having traced those aspects of language theory which relate primarily to social theory in the previous chapter, I will now indicate some of the points of contact that exist between the sensualistic theory of language origin and the rudiments of scientific evolutionary thinking in the eighteenth century. It has repeatedly been said that Darwin's doctrine of transformation had precursors in the Enlightenment.<sup>1</sup> In fact, during this period thinkers debated philosophical and scientific questions about the origin of the species from opposing perspectives. Lucretius' materialistic description of nature called forth an orthodox "anti-Lucretius," part of whose program was to draw a dualistic dividing line between human beings and animals and to emphasize the immutability of the species.<sup>2</sup> The doctrine of preformation in the eighteenth century can be viewed as a kind of biological parallel to the hypothesis of innate ideas, and overcoming this doctrine, to which Maupertuis also contributed, can also be seen as a step toward opening up a new dimension of scientific evolutionary thinking. Similar things could be said about the elaboration of the concept of the organism, on which Maupertuis and Diderot both labored and which contributed to the overcoming of the mechanistic view of biological phenomena. Maupertuis and Diderot also advanced to the concept of matter capable of both thought and development.

In Buffon's description of nature, the theory of the great "chain of beings" ("chaîne des êtres") that composed a static hierarchy of living creatures, leads to the beginnings of evolutionary thinking that Maillet had formulated even more distinctly in his *Telliamed*. The opposition of Voltaire and others to Maillet's natural-historical hypotheses was based on a particular notion of the immutability of the species.<sup>3</sup>

If Maupertuis, Diderot, and Rousseau, who were deeply concerned about the origin of language, can also be counted among the pioneers of scientific evolutionary thinking in France, then this is especially true of Herder's role in Germany. I do not want to increase the already considerable number of "Darwin's precursors"<sup>4</sup> even more by including representatives of the Enlightenment debate about the origin of language and the "language of

animals.” It would be more accurate to speak of the problem by referring to Herder and the beginnings of a scientific doctrine of development in the eighteenth century<sup>5</sup> than to use the phrase “Herder as a precursor of Darwin.”<sup>6</sup>

Traces of this sort are so numerous in the eighteenth century that, with respect to Darwin, it would indeed be difficult, with a word possessing such a broad range of meaning as “predecessor,” “to resist the impression that one can discover predecessors everywhere.”<sup>7</sup> Even within the discussion concerning the language of animals and the origin of language one finds the outlines of a scientific doctrine of development, namely in the effort to place human beings within the overall context of nature, as well as in the use of such central concepts for Enlightenment historical thinking as “progress” and “perfectibility”.

The awareness of the historical changeability of languages was certainly not new. Even theories of the divine creation of language and of the Babylonian confusion of languages did not prevent a historical view of language change, even if change was often seen simply as a decline from an original ideal language. There were also some early attempts to see connections between the development of languages and society. The efforts in seventeenth-century France to standardize language were designed to curb the arbitrary change of language. The sensualistic hypothesis of the origin and development of language provided the eighteenth-century debate with a philosophically grounded theoretical foundation for the concept of the development of language, and it thus gave questions pertaining to language theory a new ideological and philosophical dimension.

We saw that in seventeenth-century philosophy the discussion of language was connected to the problem of the place of humanity in nature, the relationship between human beings and animals—which Descartes had once again made relevant—and even to the basic philosophical question of the relationship between spirit and matter.

The central role of semiotic theory for eighteenth-century sensualism in particular gave to the question of the origin of language and of the relationship between language and thinking a new significance within the framework of Enlightenment secularized ideology. It also changed the way people saw the place of humanity within the general context of nature, and the formation of the concept of perfectibility in both the biological as well as the social realms. The *History of the Human Spirit*<sup>8</sup> is one of the contemporary thematizations of the idea of progress, whereas, in biology, overcoming the mechanistic ideology through the concept of the organism was a step toward consolidating scientific theories of development.<sup>9</sup>

The sensualistic hypothesis about the origin of language and cognition thus immediately touched on the problems that had lent the debate about the “language” and “soul” of animals an ideological dimension. For describing the forms of animal communication enabled one to see physical foundations of communication in all living creatures, and it even supplied arguments for

the assumption that matter itself possessed some rudimentary sensibility and perhaps an inherent capacity for thinking and communication. It was precisely this assumption that continued to be opposed by Descartes's dualism and his automaton theory of animals, but Leibniz's doctrine of prestabilized harmony was also a refined attempt to explain the relationship between spirit and matter. Hence we see the continuation of the controversy in the eighteenth century, and numerous publications on the problem of the "soul of animals" and a corresponding relevance of the "language of animals."<sup>10</sup>

Toward the end of the seventeenth century in France, even dictionaries echoed this problem, which interested a relatively broad reading public. The poetic anthropomorphism of animals in the fables of La Fontaine, who stood close to Gassendi's sensualism, certainly contributed to this interest. Pardies's *Discours de la connaissances des bêtes* of 1672, a comprehensive problematization of Descartes's thesis of the automatism of animals, pointed out the danger that Descartes's automaton theory could bring about precisely the opposite of its good intention, namely that it could suggest that matter could be endowed with a soul and could thus raise doubts about the immortality of the human soul.

It is undeniably true that the spread of sensualism during the eighteenth century, fueled among other things by repeated editions of the French translation of Locke's *Essay*, increased official suspicion of sensualism precisely because of Locke's hypothesis that matter could be endowed with a soul. In any case, Voltaire had to flee after he had become a propagator of Lockean sensualism with his *Lettres philosophiques* in 1734. The protestation, which he had taken from Locke, that the hypothetical assumption of a material soul was not contradictory to faith since it impressively underscored the omnipotence of the Creator who is able to endow even matter with the capacity to think—this assertion was unable to ward off the suspicion that he catered to materialism and atheism.

In 1739, Bougeant published a work entitled *Amusement philosophiques sur le langage des bêtes*, which achieved a sort of scandalous notoriety, thus ensuring that the work was reissued several times, but also causing ecclesiastical authorities to intervene. Bougeant aroused ecclesiastical displeasure because of the way he portrayed the forms of sensation and communication in animals, which seemed to place in question the status of human beings as the crowning achievement of creation. In so doing, Bougeant had attempted to delimit the recognition of a soul in animals, which was the inescapable logical conclusion of recognizing their "language," by granting them merely the souls of "daemons."

Bougeant's work is one example among numerous other eighteenth-century pronouncements on the problem of a soul in animals, in the center of which was the question of humanity's place in the universe. Not without reason, the *Dictionnaire antiphilosophique*, which was directed explicitly against Voltaire's *Dictionnaire philosophique*, warns of the dangers in

assuming a soul in animals and of blurring the distinction between humanity and animals.<sup>11</sup>

Linné's *Systema naturae* of 1735 also contributed to the animation of this discussion. Linné's categorization of a group of anthropomorphic beings, which included humans as well as apes and the sloth, and his emphasis on the difficulty of fundamentally differentiating the anatomy of human beings from that of apes, gave human intellectual capacities and especially language an even greater weight in substantiating the uniqueness of humanity. Yet, on the basis of travel reports, Linné himself attributed linguistic communicative abilities to the orangutan.<sup>12</sup> The immutability of the species must have been a conclusion that was all the more compelling; it was a basic assumption of the *Systema naturae* and was once more proclaimed by the anti-Enlightenment *Anti-Lucrèce*.<sup>13</sup>

Beginning at the mid-eighteenth century, Buffon began to edit his monumental description of nature, which presupposed a hierarchy of all living creatures that is based upon the uniform "molécules organiques;" and it was this work that paved the way for evolutionary historical thinking. Yet, like Descartes, Buffon drew a clear line between animals and human beings and he supported this division by appealing to the linguistic ability that humanity alone possessed. He even emphasized that the higher apes have exactly the same brain and the same organs of articulation as human beings and concluded that cognition and language could, in the final analysis, only be the product of a non-corporeal substance.<sup>14</sup>

Buffon's dualistic demarcation between humans and animals was rejected by Condillac and by the influential scientist and animal psychologist Charles Bonnet. Condillac in fact wrote his *Traité des animaux* directly in response to Buffon. He adopted his own earlier explanation of the genesis of language and thought from his *Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines* and, characteristically, he spoke more about human beings than about animals. He investigated animal communication in a separate chapter together with the thesis that animals communicate with one another according to their needs, and that they accomplish this by using a "language of action" that consists of body movements and non-articulated sounds. Human beings, too, possess such a "language of action," which they have, as animals do, by virtue of their bodily organs; but humans were alone in developing this language into articulated phonetic language.<sup>15</sup>

Both animals and human beings thus share the basic elements of the language of action because of their bodily organism. All of the sensations and ideas they express with this language only occur by receiving sense impressions. Even the use of the language of action thus takes place in both humans and animals within a learning process. But human beings alone were able to develop articulated phonetic language and they gradually perfected articulation through practice.

The animalistic-human language of action and human articulated phonetic language both have, despite all of their differences, essential characteristics in

common. The functional principle of both is the “connection of ideas” (“*liaison des idées*”), and the need to communicate provides its motivating force. Thus, for animals as well, the “*liaison des idées*” connects sensations or ideas with signs, and, by using these signs, it connects ideas with one another.<sup>16</sup>

The factor triggering every communicative act is some particular need. At the first stage of the language of action, both animals and humans are motivated by the primary needs of survival, such as nourishment and protection from enemies. With humans, this capability reaches a much higher level because human society allows entirely different needs to arise than does the simple coexistence of animals. Human communication is thus far from the stage at which merely the primary needs of survival had to be satisfied, and in the course of its historical development it assumed the most varied guises (which today we would designate as sociocultural), extending all the way to the categories of art included in Condillac’s portrayal.

Charles Bonnet also offered a sensualistic explanation of animal and human communication. He broadened Condillac’s predominantly philosophical and speculative thesis by empirically observing animals and taking physiological and anatomical considerations into account. Bonnet expanded Condillac’s opinion that animals communicate with one another to include the important observation that the differences among their organic structures are the cause of their varying communicative capabilities. In response to Buffon, he repeatedly stated that apes lack the capacity to produce language because their brain structure differs from that of humans.<sup>17</sup>

Despite his fundamentally religious stance, Bonnet’s observations about the forms of cognition and communication in all living creatures led him to formulate the hypothesis that the soul might possibly be material. In the event that this might be convincingly proven, then it would be only one more reason to admire the power that bestowed the capacity to think on matter.<sup>18</sup> Bonnet thus adopted the deistic conception of Locke and Voltaire, who were accused, as I have already indicated, of advocating materialism.

By advocating the religious notion of palingenesis, Bonnet even thought that animal species could attain perfection, which he associated with the perfectibility of their communicative abilities. Taking as a starting point the connection between the agility of an elephant’s trunk and the high intelligence and communicative capacity this animal was thought to have, Bonnet expressed the hypothetical conclusion that the intelligence and communicative capability of the elephant, if further developed, could enable it to ascend into the intellectual sphere of human beings.<sup>19</sup> If the Creator, in his wisdom, had not set eternal limits to the development of the intellectual faculties of animals, the place on the throne that humanity occupies as the king of animals would become jeopardized.<sup>20</sup> Ch.-G.Leroy, who was also indebted to sensualistic philosophy and based his ideas on his own observations of animals and of their forms of communication, likewise used

the Enlightenment notion of “perfectibilité” with regard to animals in his *Lettres philosophiques sur l’intelligence et la perfectibilité des animaux* (1802; an earlier edition appeared in 1768).

Like Condillac and Bonnet, the Swiss Albrecht von Haller, an influential natural scientist, contradicted Buffon’s conception of the boundary between animals and human beings. Despite his own religious reservations about certain logical conclusions that could arise from sensualism, Haller shared several fundamental sensualistic views with Condillac (who, incidentally, in his own response to Buffon referred to the physiological works by Haller about the irritability of the animal body). In a phrase that describes cognition as “sensation transformée,” Haller even quoted Condillac’s criticism of the dualistic remnants in Locke’s sensualism: “Locke unjustifiably separated reflection from the senses as a source of the sensations; reflection itself is originally nothing other than sensation, and this apparently minor error consequently led Locke far afield.”<sup>21</sup> Haller also appropriated the notion of a constitutive role for the sign for cognition. The fewer signs animals possess, he wrote, the worse their memory is. The language of the passions has important common traits in animals and human beings. It is so universal, in fact, that animals not only communicate with one another in it, but even human beings and animals can communicate with one another in the language of passions.<sup>22</sup>

These objections by Condillac, Charles Bonnet, and Albrecht von Haller to Buffon’s strict distinction between animals and human beings that was modelled on Descartes’s ideas, make clear the dilemma that the investigation of the animal mind and animal communication inevitably created in the philosophy of the eighteenth century. In addition to others, the mathematician and natural scientist Maupertuis, whose linguistic interests we saw in connection with the debate surrounding the origin of language, now pointed out that if the soulless mechanism of animals would explain all of their actions, as the Cartesians maintained, then the conclusion forcibly suggests itself that a soul (understood as an immaterial intellectual principle) would be superfluous for human beings as well.

The recognition of a soul in animals avoided this awkward conclusion. But, in the consequent approximation of humans and animals that it implied, it only raised yet another dilemma that also opened the way to a materialistic interpretation of nature. Georg Friedrich Meier, a professor of philosophy at Halle, could publish his *Attempt to create a new Doctrine of the Souls of Animals* of 1749 with equanimity because his previous work, *Proof that no Matter is capable of Cognition* of 1742, prevented dangerous interpretations that might arise from recognizing a soul in animals.

Like La Mettrie and, later, Hennings in his comprehensive *History of the Souls of Human Beings and Animals* (Halle, 1774), Maupertuis thought that Descartes’s automaton theory was in reality an attempt to protect the consequences of a precise description of nature from the suspicions of theologians.<sup>23</sup> He saw in the behavior of animals the proof of their mental

activity and their capacity for cognition. As a biologist, Maupertuis was an opponent of the doctrine of preformation, and he went so far as to assume that sensibility and even memory were fundamental elements of matter and as such were the preconditions for the genesis and development of organisms<sup>24</sup>—an idea that in today's terminology could be formulated as “the ability to process information.”

Diderot, who had adopted Condillac's sensualism, and in his *Pensées sur l'interprétation de la nature* of 1753–4 referred to the works of Maupertuis, made the ability to communicate a component of his hypothesis concerning the evolution of matter into the formation of organisms, the development of which finally produced the highest intellectual characteristics. Thus one could assume that a union of the elements of matter formed an organism that in an infinitely long process of development gradually achieved ever higher stages of intellectual and communicative abilities. Beginning with the elementary qualities of movement and sense activity, this development occurred during a stretch of “millions of years,” which extended through various stages of sign use and the formation of cognition, up to the origin of articulated phonetic language, the sciences, and the arts.<sup>25</sup>

With Maupertuis, and even more explicitly with Diderot, an evolutionary concept of transformation thus actually did take the place of a static sequence of stages and interlinkage among all living creatures. This concept of transformation includes, moreover, a consideration of the function of signs and language, to which Condillac had attributed a central function in the development of “sensation transformée.”

Was the differentiation between the ontogenesis and phylogenesis of living creatures partially suggested by Condillac's phylogenetic explanation of thought and language, with which both Maupertuis and Diderot were familiar? I have already indicated that in addition to an ontogenetic point of view, Condillac, as opposed to Locke, also offered a phylogenetic explanation of language and cognition that he thought underlay the concept of “sensation transformée.” The general absence of this distinction between ontogenesis and phylogenesis in numerous eighteenth-century pronouncements on the origin of language and thought is, in fact, probably their single weakest scientific aspect.

As long as it was still inconceivable that the human species had its own history of development, the individual—as representative of the fully developed species—was projected back into history in considerations of the origin of language and cognition. The inevitable consequence of this practice was a model of development based on the psychology of an individual, a model that made the normal language acquisition of a child, the communicative behavior of people raised in isolation from society, or even deaf-mutes into ideal experimental subjects for the explanation of the genesis of language. Thus there was a seemingly never-ending discussion about the sign language of deaf-mutes and about the intellectual and communicative capabilities of “wild children”; in fact the observation of these phenomena

led to important conclusions about life in normal society as the necessary condition for the formation of these abilities.<sup>26</sup>

In Condillac's theory, too, a model of the origin of language and cognition based on individual psychology occupies a great deal of space. But Condillac's hypothesis placed the gradual development of language and cognition within a historical dimension, which very clearly deviated from Locke's view. For the explanation of cognition as "sensation transformée" aimed at the understanding of a phylogenetic process: he thus added organic conditions to the complete functioning of the organs of articulation. And in a historical process of development and abstraction, in which sign use is at the same time an instrument and object of an unceasing development, both language and thought emerge from a stage of sensation and communication that is also shared by the other higher animal species.<sup>27</sup> Even today, the human "language of action" calls to mind the original forms of communication. Certainly articulated phonetic language originated in a natural development from the "language of action" that was a mixture of gestures and sounds, but articulated phonetic language had to complete its own independent development by asserting itself against the language of gestures.<sup>28</sup> The phylogenetic explanation of the origin of language in Condillac's conception is therefore unmistakable. Following Condillac, Rousseau also demonstrated a phylogenetic orientation when he called human beings at the earliest stage of their history "animal stupide et borné."

Despite Herder's rejection of the concept of "sensation transformée" as the basis of language development and despite his emphasis on the special status of humanity, his thesis of the natural genesis of language also disputed the divine origin of language: "Thus, the ingenious hypothesis that imputes the origin of language to human invention, is basically an insipid idea of a few Newtonians on this side of the channel, all of whom belong to the droll race of apes."<sup>29</sup> Herder's partial and half-hearted response to this objection did not prevent him from later developing in his *Ideas toward the Philosophy of the History of Humanity* the outlines of a natural-historical doctrine of development that was even more explicit than his treatise on the origin of language.

In the same year as his *Ideas toward the Philosophy of the History of Humanity* appeared, Herder arranged for the publication of *Lord Monboddo's Work on the Origin and Progress of Language*, which I described above. It places the genesis of language in a historical perspective, which, more so than in Herder's own work, is enlarged to include that of natural history as well. Although Herder distanced himself from Monboddo's opinion "that apes and human beings are one race," he nevertheless traced the human capacity of speech to the human organism, which differs from that of apes, and to the form of human society. In his late work, *Kalligone*, which is primarily devoted to aesthetics, Herder adopted ideas concerning historical development from Bonnet and saw a connection between the intellectual level of humans and the facility of their hands: "By what means was the

elephant able to become the wisest of the animals? Through its multi-jointed hand, its trunk.”<sup>30</sup>

With Lamarck, eighteenth-century notions of historical development were replaced by an explicit doctrine of the transformation of species, which was a response to new scientific knowledge, but which was also not totally independent of a sensualistic theory of science. Lamarck had already become acquainted with such a theory of science within the circle of “Ideologues” before he presented a full statement of his doctrine of the transformation of species in 1809 in his *Philosophie zoologique*, in which he included a discussion of anthropogenesis. Lamarck saw the role of “needs” or “desires,” which Condillac had emphasized in the development of the communicative faculty, as a factor of the higher development in the formation of the organs of articulation and of the brain. In anthropoids, which he saw as the most highly developed species, the specificities related to social forms of life led to ever higher communicative needs and to a corresponding ability to communicate. The formation of the organs of articulation and the higher development of the brain resulted in a process of interaction with the genesis of language.<sup>31</sup>

Darwin’s first major work, *On the Origin of Species* of 1859, was not yet devoted to anthropogenesis. But soon thereafter, and under Darwin’s immediate influence, August Schleicher sketched out in his work *On the Meaning of Language for the Natural History of Humanity* of 1865 the genesis and development of language in formulations that hark back to the sensualistic arguments of the Enlightenment debate and especially to Condillac’s arguments concerning the “language of action” in both human beings and animals as the point of origin of the gradual development of articulated phonetic language; but in addition they explicitly point out the process of human development:

[T]he study of language at least finds nothing that would contradict the assumption that the simplest expressions of ideas by means of sounds, that languages of the simplest structure, gradually developed out of phonetic gestures and imitations of sounds, both of which animals also possess. To prove this in more detail here would lead too far afield, and I also believe that from the perspective of the modern natural sciences the results arrived at in the study of language will find the least resistance.

I believe I can spare myself the trouble of refuting the view that language was the invention of an individual, or that it was given to human beings from some external source. Language, which we observe as undergoing constant change in the short span of time represented by the historical life of human beings until now, is thus considered to be a product of a gradual process of becoming according to certain laws of life, the essential features of which we are easily able to illustrate. And the only assumption that is consistent with that which posits a material foundation of language in the somatic condition of human beings is the

one that equates the genesis and development of language with the formation of the brain and the organs of speech.

But if language is the agency that creates the human being, then our ancestors were not originally what we call human beings, for these arose only with the formation of language. But we mean by formation the same thing as development of the brain and of the organs of speech. Thus the conclusions reached by linguistics lead us to suppose a gradual development of the human being from lower forms. This is a view which, as we know, scientists have adopted in our day after approaching it from an entirely different angle. Precisely for this reason, language would undoubtedly be of importance to the study of nature, and in particular to the history of human development.<sup>32</sup>

Three years after Schleicher's work was published, a study by Bleek *On the Origin of Language as the first Chapter of an History of Human Development* appeared in 1868, edited and prefaced with an introduction by Ernst Haeckel, the first important propagator of Darwinism in Germany.

When in 1871 Darwin dared to publish *The Descent of Man*, sensualistic ideas about the genesis of language were apparent in his conclusion "that language owes its origin to the imitation and transformation of different natural sounds, of the voices of other animals, and to humans' own instinctive cries that were supported by signs and gestures."<sup>33</sup> Yet, in making this assertion, Darwin was referring to contemporary linguists such as Schleicher and Max Müller, as well as others.

Darwin treated the genesis of articulated phonetic language by comparing the intellectual and communicative faculties of human beings with those of animals. This topic, which had been debated again and again ever since the seventeenth century, so much interested him that he subsequently devoted an entire book to *The Expression of the Passions in Man and Animals* in 1872. Thus yet another familiar problem piqued Darwin's interest, one that had been much discussed since the seventeenth century and in particular in Enlightenment language debates, namely the question of the physical determination of the "passions," and the ways they are expressed, that are common to human beings and animals. Darwin's own grandfather, Erasmus Darwin, had also already considered this topic in his *Zoonomia, or the Laws of Organic Life* of 1784.<sup>34</sup>

Ernst Haeckel, one of Darwin's great promoters in Germany, also emphasized the connection between the origin of language and anthropogenesis in his own writings. He thus returned to points of contention familiar from the pertinent Enlightenment debates, beginning with the thesis of the divine creation of language, which was still being defended "by respected authorities" in the nineteenth century:

All students of language who have kept up with the progress of science even to the slightest degree now unanimously assume that all human

languages gradually and slowly developed out of the humblest beginnings. On the other hand, the fantastical proposition, which thirty years ago was still being defended by respected authorities, that language is a divine gift, is now, one might safely say, generally disregarded and at best will be defended by theologians and by people who have absolutely no idea of natural development. In view of the brilliant results attained by comparative linguistics, one would indeed have to cover one's eyes with both hands if one did not want to see the natural development of language. For the natural scientist this is actually self-evident. For language is a physiological function of the human organism that developed simultaneously with its organs, the larynx and the tongue and at the same time as the brain functions.<sup>35</sup>

Haeckel pointed out that Lamarck essentially gave the same explanation for the genesis of language and thought in anthropogenesis, but Haeckel's point of view obviously did not extend to the eighteenth century and to the importance of the sensualistic orientation of Lamarck.

Another defender of Darwinism, which was then still being hotly contested, did refer, however, to questions raised in eighteenth-century language debates and to their continuation in Darwin's scientific justification of the theory of transformation. At the beginning of his book *Descendance et Darwinisme*, the second edition of which appeared in 1876, the author devoted a section to "The Findings of Philology."<sup>36</sup> He thus gave first place to the findings achieved by the investigation of the genesis and development of language ever since the middle of the eighteenth century, which he thought counted among the arguments in Darwin's favor. The author clearly read the theories concerning the origin of language with regard to their contemporary importance for the origin of humanity and as an expression of the efforts to determine "the place of human beings in nature."<sup>37</sup> It is, on the other hand, characteristic that he mentioned Maupertuis, Rousseau, and Herder<sup>38</sup> in this connection, whose works had unleashed an immediate public response in the discussion of the origin of language, but also that he did not mention Condillac's sensualistic philosophy and linguistic theory as an important theoretical source of the questions they addressed.

## 12 The “abuse of words”

Thus far my investigations have centered primarily on theoretical responses to linguistic questions against the background of a larger philosophical and anthropological debate.

The eighteenth-century discussion was also influenced by this general context when it turned to the issue of linguistic usage as it is realized in social communication. Topics such as neology, synonymy, the social characteristics of linguistic norms, the “abuse of words,” and the related problem of the discrepancy between words and things, belong to this category, all of which also attracted a great amount of interest during the years of the Revolution.

In the Autumn of 1791, the “Society of Lovers of the French Language” (“Société des amateurs de la Langue Française”) was founded. The opening speech was held by the founder of the society, the “grammairien-patriote” Urbain Domergue, editor of the *Journal de la Langue Française*. Among its subscribers counted Robespierre, Condorcet, and Louis-Sébastien Mercier, all of whom were possibly present at the charter meeting. Like the *Journal de la Langue Française*, the “Société des amateurs de la Langue Française” was intended to apply the revolutionary work of liberation to language. Domergue thought that it might now be possible to correct the most fateful error to have brought misfortune to humanity, namely “the abuse of words that deceives us about the nature of things” (“l’abus des mots qui nous trompe sur les choses”).<sup>1</sup>

The opposition between words and things was a formula that summarized an important aspect of the eighteenth-century discussion of the role language played, on the one hand, in the conservation and continuation of prejudices, and on the other, in the propagation of truth. The linguistic solidification and transmission of prejudices was a form of “misuse” against which the vehement criticism of the Enlightenment was directed, and it was not coincidental that the misuse of words was described by the rather more inflammatory slogan of “abuse,” which had been one of the crystallization points of Enlightenment social criticism. Before Domergue, no less a person than Helvétius had already pointed out

that the abuse of words was the doom of humanity, for it prevented the recognition and propagation of truth.<sup>2</sup>

The emphasis on a distance or an opposition between words and things, and the reference to an incomplete or false cognition of things that was anchored in words, had, to be sure, a long tradition. One of the first examples of it is Plato's dialogue *Cratylus*, which raises the question of reproducing the nature of things and ideas through words. The medieval debate about universals was also particularly concerned with the relationship between the word and reality.

One must mention as well in connection with the criticism of the abuse of words the tradition of criticism of scholastic rhetoric. Common to representatives of the emerging experiential science in the sixteenth century, and then to those of Cartesian rationalism as well as of sensualism, was the criticism, which was understood as an expression of their opposition to the scholastic scientific mind, of the role of rhetoric and the rejection of disputations as a means of finding truth. Descartes himself saw in scholastic disputations a rhetorical cloaking of ignorance and, indeed, an obstacle to true knowledge.<sup>3</sup>

The "empiricist"<sup>4</sup> Ambroise Paré made the claim in the sixteenth century that "the sciences consist of things, not of words" ("les sciences sont composées de choses, non de paroles"). Fontenelle was able to characterize the eighteenth century as a "century strong in things" ("siècle fort de choses") and conclude that the reign of *words* was over and that people wanted *things*: "Le règne des termes et des mots est fini, on veut des choses."<sup>5</sup>

The polarity of "les mots et les choses" thus expresses a stance toward language that, alongside of the problems of "usage," critically considers the knowledge fixed within language as well as the role of language in its formation and propagation. The slogan "les mots et les choses" therefore connected the discussion of language with that concern of the Enlightenment which was repeatedly thematized as the eradication of prejudices, or "préjugés," and also points out the role language plays in the conservation and propagation of erroneous opinions.

With the aid of language, a false opinion becomes rooted in the public mind and continues into the most distant reaches of posterity: it becomes a prejudice of the people, sometimes a prejudice of the learned, which is much worse than the prejudices of the people.<sup>6</sup>

If Locke's extensive treatment of the "abuse of words," including the role language plays in establishing prejudices, recommended the further investigation of this problem, then he had immediate predecessors in the seventeenth century in this regard, too. Descartes had already indicated that the habit of becoming accustomed to the "confused meanings of words" contributed to the retention of "préjugés" and was a hindrance to achieving true knowledge.<sup>7</sup> He thus thought that the suggestion of creating a universal

language based on a very precise analysis of ideas was justified. Such a language would be able to render “all things” so clearly that an error would hardly be possible. With its aid, one could therefore discover a science that would even allow peasants to judge the “truth of things” better even than philosophers had previously been able to do. Yet Descartes felt that insurmountable obstacles stood in the way of this project.<sup>8</sup>

With these reflections, Descartes responded as early as 1629 to the proposal of a universal language, which was a project of great relevance to rationalism. Stimulated by the writings of Dalgarno and Wilkins, Leibniz then issued several proposals for sign systems that were supposed to function simultaneously as an instrument of communication and as an aid to cognition.

After his relatively early response to the project of a universal language, Descartes later repeatedly returned to the lack of clarity in the meanings of words and their influence on thought. In one of his *Meditations*, he pointed out that words contributed to the continuation of childhood “préjugés” and that the danger of neglecting things in favor of words arises from the necessity of communicating thoughts with words:

[S]ince we combine our concepts with certain words in order to express them with the mouth, and since we remember more words than things, it is difficult for us to conceive of the concept of things so distinctly that we completely separate them from the words which were chosen to designate them. Every human being pays more attention to words than to things; for this reason they often give assent to expressions which they do not understand and which they do not devote a great deal of effort to understanding.<sup>9</sup>

Descartes subsequently entered into a debate with Gassendi, of all people, about the concept of “préjugé,” and he accused his opponent of abusing this term: Gassendi had earlier criticized Descartes’s proposition “I think, therefore I am” as an expression of a prejudice, since it equates thinking with being—a reproach that Descartes dismissed as an abuse of the word “préjugé.”<sup>10</sup>

Following Descartes, the Port-Royal *Logic* also saw the danger of persistently misdirecting thought in the necessity of using physical signs for the communication of ideas. It was a danger that could lead to “linking our ideas so closely with *words* that we often heed *words* more than *things*. This is one of the most common causes of the confusion of our thoughts and of our language.”<sup>11</sup> This danger is present in all concepts that do not belong to the “pure intellect” for they can vary greatly from person to person. As a means of redressing confusion in the meanings of words, the Port-Royal *Logic* took up the scholastic distinction between nominal and real definitions and expanded this distinction within its methodological aims. Several chapters justify distinguishing between a “définition des choses” and a

"définition des noms," as well as between "idées des choses" and "idées des signes," and to define precisely the meaning of words as the necessary condition of clear thinking and intelligible communication.<sup>12</sup> This was a demand that Régis repeated in his synopsis of the Cartesian system.<sup>13</sup>

At the same time, however, in the opposition between words and things, the latter did not always simply signify concrete objects. In this context, "choses" meant rather that which actually exists and thus corresponded to the philosophical sense of the Latin word "ens." Similarly, in the Port-Royal *Logic* "choses" designates actually existent beings on both the material and intellectual level. Yet, in opposition to "les mots," the meaning of "choses" is enlarged to include the quality of an object of knowledge. By emphasizing the difference between a familiarity with words and knowledge of things, the opposition "les mots/les choses" indicates above all the role that can be accorded to signs in determining and propagating error or truth.

It is unclear whether the Port-Royal *Logic* was advocating a Jansenist perspective, and also perhaps making a certain concession to Vaugelas, when it allowed that, in the interests of unequivocal communication, it may be necessary to accept meanings in the "usage" of words that do not correspond to the "truth of the things."<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, this recognition of "usage" also contains a decisive criticism of its power. The *Logic* stressed that people often have different notions about the same things, but that they still refer to these things by the same names so that various, and sometimes conflicting, meanings can be connected with the same word. The "usage" here has to be seen as regulating the meaning of words so that people can communicate with one another. If one had to explain linguistic usage, one would have to assign definitions to words that correspond to the "usage" even if the "vérité de l'usage" and the "vérité des choses" may not correspond with one another.<sup>15</sup>

It was probably in response to Vaugelas's opinion that a false word was easier to notice than a false thought, and thus more disturbing, that in 1689 Andry de Boisregard (in his *Réflexions sur l'usage présent de la langue française, ou remarques nouvelles et critiques touchant la politesse du langage*) demanded that more attention be paid to things than to words and claimed that truth was more important than polite manners in language: "One ought to prefer a solid object that is not polished to a polished object that is not solid" ("il vaudrait mieux aimer être solide sans être poli, qu'être poli sans être solide").<sup>16</sup>

It is certainly not the case, however, that the opposition between "les mots" and "les choses" was characteristic only of the rationalists. Like Descartes and the Port-Royal *Logic*, Bacon and Gassendi had also warned of the ambiguity of words. They maintained that unclear meanings of words only increased the confusion that arose from an insufficient knowledge of things. Most of the scholastic disputes in general came about, they felt, because the opponents attached different ideas to the same word—a view that was often repeated. The differentiation between nominal and real

definitions was also no less relevant for Locke and the *Encyclopédie* than it had been for the Port-Royal *Logic*.

The political abuse of language had already been a topic of seventeenth-century discussions. Several precursors to the Enlightenment, such as Bacon, Hobbes, Pufendorf, and Spinoza, saw the danger of political deception in words. Bacon’s description of the “*idola fori*”<sup>17</sup> and Hobbes’s comments on the ambiguity of such terms as democracy, anarchy, aristocracy, oligarchy, and tyrant, demonstrate an insufficient awareness of the speakers of the meaning of the words they use, rather than a deliberate deception.<sup>18</sup> Pufendorf saw an offence against a fundamental natural law of humanity in the consciously misleading use of language and of signs in general.<sup>19</sup> Besides claiming that inexact meanings of words codify inexact thinking, Spinoza also criticized the use of language to further the spiritual and political goals of domination rather than to express truth.<sup>20</sup>

Similarly, Locke emphasized that language can be used as an instrument of suspending public law.<sup>21</sup> A similar criticism by Locke is directed against the advocates of innate ideas: a maxim, which people use in order to influence and control others, can be proclaimed to be an innate idea so as to exclude any doubt about its validity.<sup>22</sup>

I have already discussed Locke’s extensive treatment of the abuse of words. One of its manifestations was fashionable jargon, whose pompous terminology cloaked the absence of true concepts. The “abuse of words” is also a reason why Locke asked the question whether the knowledge of truth was impeded rather than furthered by the use of language. Locke thus thought that one of the pressing tasks facing the discovery of truth consisted in differentiating between the meaning of words and the actual knowledge of things. Locke’s extensive treatment of the abuse of words doubtless contributed to the relevance of this problem in the linguistic debates of the French Enlightenment.

But, of course, the impetus did not come solely from Locke when the use of language was criticized as an instrument of misleading people. This would be true, for example, of the comments on language that Jean Meslier introduced into his atheistic critique of religion and society in order to underscore the *abuse* of religion for secular goals of domination: words such as God (“*dieu*”), devil (“*diable*”), religion, serve to create false convictions in the people, with which injustice and tyranny are legitimated and disguised.<sup>23</sup> To achieve the same ends, ruling figures will lend prestige to such words as “*seigneur*,” “*prince*,” “*roi*,” and “*monarque*” in order to oppress the people.<sup>24</sup>

Locke’s comments on the abuse of words, then, were certainly not uninvolved in Du Bos’s decision to reflect repeatedly on the problem facing the historian in the unclear and erroneous use of words in sources in his interpretation of French history. Du Bos’s four-volume *Histoire critique de l’établissement de la monarchie française dans les Gaules* of 1734, whose presentation of history entered into a discussion of contemporary political debates, repeatedly returns to terminological problems in the Latin and

French sources. If words such as "civitas" and "urbs" can be ambiguous in Latin, or have at least several meanings, and can thus be used "abusively" ("abusivement"), then the same is also true of their French translations "ville" or "cité." A further source of misunderstanding and misapprehension are the designations of dignitaries, and most particularly the characterizations of the various levels of the social hierarchy.<sup>25</sup>

This terminological issue was also a point of departure for Montesquieu in his rejection of Du Bos's portrayal of history. He accused Du Bos of having used the meanings he assigned to the designations of social classes to falsify those words in the interests of promoting his view of French history. Montesquieu treated the "abus des mots" in other historical contexts as well, as for example when he problematized the concept of "l'èse-majesté."<sup>26</sup> According to Montesquieu, no word had "received more different meanings and impressed minds in so many different ways" than the word "liberté." The various meanings which people have given the word "liberté" thus form the subject of a separate chapter in Montesquieu's epoch-making work *De l'Esprit des lois* of 1748.<sup>27</sup>

At the same time, a work that garnered much contemporary attention added a historical dimension to the discussion of the abuse of language, and its argument was also inevitably seen as taking a critical stance toward the present: in 1744, a translation of a work by Warburton appeared, under the title *Essai sur les Hiéroglyphes des Egyptiens*, who interpreted the use of Egyptian hieroglyphs as a means by which the Egyptian priestly caste maintained its power.<sup>28</sup>

Around the middle of the eighteenth century, the abuse of language and the opposition between words and things had become such fashionable topics that in 1752 a novel even appeared with the title *Le mot et la chose*. Thirty years later, it was reprinted in the "Bibliothèque Universelle des Romans," in which a foreword emphasized that the title *Le mot et la chose* had been motivated by a long linguistic debate and would only be understandable if one took this context into account: "In a country other than France, this title would not be comprehensible at all...for half a century we have known that the word is not the thing and that the latter does not always correspond to the word."<sup>29</sup> Now the word, whose lack of correspondence with reality this novel set out to illustrate, points out the intertwining of the slogan words "les mots et les choses" with the "abus des mots" and, at the same time, indicates the sociocritical orientation of the novel, which was characteristic of the debate about the abuse of language. The title of the novel refers to the phrase "la bonne compagnie," which conveys an entirely false notion of the matter in question, since this ostensibly "good society" was in reality the most questionable. Similarly, Duclos, a friend of numerous Enlightenment philosophers, said that the circles of society that call themselves "la société" and hence consider themselves to be judges in all matters of language and customs were actually no more than a "coterie," or clique.<sup>30</sup>

"For half a century," it was therefore announced in 1782, the French have known how to distinguish between words and things—it is also no coincidence that this reference precisely corresponds to the time at which the translation of Locke's *Essay* inaugurated the dissemination of sensualism in France. Corresponding to the propagation of sensualism around the middle of the century is the climax of the discussion about the abuse of language in which, in addition to Condillac, Diderot, d'Alembert, Rousseau, Helvétius and Holbach, Voltaire and Mably were also involved, and in which the Berlin Academy also participated by posing the prize question about the mutual influence of language and thought.

Condillac's new hypothesis concerning the constitutive role that signs play in cognition lent the problem of the abuse of language an even greater weight and made the demand more compelling to bring signs into agreement with the reality they represent, for this was a condition of the progress of knowledge. But Condillac did not suggest the definition of meaning as the primary means of eradicating imprecise and false meanings of words, as his predecessors (first among them Locke) had done. Instead of definitions of words, he demanded the analysis of ideas and the things they represent in order then to arrive at the precise meanings of words. The constant analysis of our ideas of things thus has to lend signs, as constitutive elements of cognition, the quality of actual instruments of knowledge. At the same time, Condillac was aware that the meanings of words can be influenced by various social interests.<sup>31</sup>

Diderot's observation that "words have immeasurably increased their number, and the knowledge of things has lagged behind,"<sup>32</sup> is more than just the obligatory consideration of a fashionable topic, as is d'Alembert's mention of the abuse of language and of the discrepancy between words and things in his "Preliminary Discourse" to the *Encyclopédie*. By providing a compendium of the most recent knowledge of things in the form of a "*Dictionnaire des Sciences, des Arts et des Métiers*," (which at the same time contained a dictionary of the French language), one goal of this work was to contribute to the elimination of the abuse of language and of the opposition between words and things.

Diderot frequently criticized even misused meanings of words that express the interests of social groups. In the article "baseness" ("bassesse") in the *Encyclopédie* he accused Girard of propagating social prejudices in his dictionary of synonyms since under the heading "bassesse" moral abjectness is described as a natural quality characterizing those of lower social origin. At the same time, Diderot did not forget Locke's comment that the role of words in the fixing and handing down of prejudices begins with children's acquisition of language.

We see here how many prejudices language instills in us.... If a child has the word "bassesse" impressed on his memory, then this word is received as a sign that subsequently awakens the idea of lower social origin,

lacking dignity, of poverty, and contempt: whether the child reads, writes, reflects or speaks, it will never encounter the word “bassesse” without combining this series of false concepts with it.<sup>33</sup>

The negative connotation of the word “peuple” is also an expression of the deformation of thought and language by political and social repression. A further indication of the decline in morals is the identification of “homme poli” with “honnête homme,” in which Diderot saw a profanation of the word “honnête” and of the moral values which it is supposed to express.<sup>34</sup> The reluctance of an oppressed people to utter the truth finally results in a general degradation of its manner of speaking: “Chez un peuple esclave, tout se dégrade. Il faut s’avilir par le ton et parle le geste.”<sup>35</sup>

Diderot simultaneously emphasized the sensualistic foundations and the political implications of his linguistic criticism when he demanded a dictionary for the French nation that, by properly considering sensory cognitive activity, would be freed from all false meanings of words. One cannot expect the fulfillment of this task from the Académie Française for it, he wrote, is a paid servant of the government.

For this institution, in the pay of the government and thus its interested slave, is held back by a great number of trivial considerations that are irreconcilable with truth. It is only possible for a free, educated, and courageous person to say: since everything that is in the understanding arrived there via sense perception, then everything that proceeds from the understanding has to be oriented toward an object that can be perceived by the senses in order to be combined with it, and to apply this rule to all words and concepts so as to designate all concepts as illusionary that do not pass this test and to call all words empty of meaning that, in the final analysis, do not originate in an image that is perceived by the senses.<sup>36</sup>

Similarly, for Helvétius the most important means to prevent the vague and erroneous use of words was the true freedom of the people, which would also liberate its language from the abuse of its oppressors.<sup>37</sup> In his *De l’esprit* and *De l’homme*, Helvétius placed the problem of the abuse of language within a socio-theoretical account of sensualism. With the example of the word “liberté” he illustrated his observation “that the false philosophy of the previous century has caused our lack of knowledge of the true meanings of words. This philosophy consisted almost solely of the art of misusing words.”<sup>38</sup> Just as algebraic calculations have to be inspected and verified, so too must many meanings of words be examined—a difficult enterprise, and a dangerous one at that when it conflicts with the interests of the powerful.<sup>39</sup>

Mably, Condillac’s brother, also engaged in social criticism masquerading as linguistic criticism when, in an argument against an apology for landed property, he said that a book entitled *Ordre naturel et essentiel des sociétés*

*politiques* represented a confusion of ideas and hence an abuse of words. For, as an attempt to legitimate landed property, the word "ordre" expresses precisely the opposite of the actual qualities of landed property:

How could you wish, sir, for me to prove the natural and essential order of society on the basis of precisely that which created its disorder? ("Comment voulez-vous, Monsieur, que je prouve l'ordre naturel et essentiel de la société dans ce qui en fait précisément le désordre?").<sup>40</sup>

In the article "Abus des mots" in his *Questions sur l'Encyclopédie* of 1770, Voltaire emphasized the abusive ambiguity in the meanings of crucial political concepts (to which Montesquieu had also called attention), such as the word "liberté," or other terms used to accuse people of having insulted secular or divine majesties.<sup>41</sup>

It can come as no surprise that the prize question issued by the Berlin Academy for the year 1759 also provoked declarations against the abuse of language. For it concerned both the mutual influence of language and thought and, given this interdependence, the possibility of eradicating the flaws of language. When in 1780, at the suggestion of d'Alembert, the Academy of Sciences then proposed the explosive topic of whether it might be useful to deceive the people, this raised, among other responses, the question whether one ought first to define what one means by "peuple," and it also brought forth a treatise whose primary aim was to criticize the abuse of language to deceive the people.<sup>42</sup>

To be sure, criticism of the meanings of words also came from opponents of the Enlightenment. We see this, for instance, in the discussions about the meaning of the word "philosophe" and "philosophie," or in the commentary on such a key Enlightenment word as "humanité," which Palissot incorporated into his virulently anti-Enlightenment comedy *Les Philosophes* of 1760; this play led Voltaire to save the honor of the word "humanité."<sup>43</sup> The accusation, finally, that Portalis levelled against the Enlighteners, in which he claimed that they had abused religion and history, the arts, and literature, included the reproach that the "abus de l'esprit philosophique" had corrupted language and had falsified the use of such words as "préjugé," "divin," "naturel," "enthousiasme," "fanatisme," and "liberté."<sup>44</sup>

As I indicated in the chapter on the origin of language and the historical conception of humanity, in his sociocritical radicalization of sensualism Rousseau delivered arguably the most eloquent statement on the social and political problems relating to the abuse of words one can find in the eighteenth century. Even his *Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité* delivered a critique of political terminology in connection with the origin and social function of language. Words were instruments in the production of inequality among people and they continue to be an instrument of its maintenance. Ever since inequality took root, social communication has occurred as a dialogue between rich and poor, the powerful and the oppressed. At the same time, words have

become an instrument of "persuasion," which aid the ruling class in making the people conform to the social norms that serve their interests. The words signifying justice and obedience are in reality instruments of violence and weapons of injustice ("toujours ces noms spécieux de justice et de subordination serviront d'instrument à la violence et d'armes à l'iniquité").<sup>45</sup> Even words like "bien public," "patrie" and "citoyen" serve to obscure social inequality and are in this sense an indication of a corrupt social form. Nevertheless, language is at first still a medium of dialogue between the powerful and the weak. Only at the level of despotism does the widespread disenfranchisement of the people take place so that, finally, the people are nothing more than the receivers of directives, and even language is replaced in the end by the application of violence as a means of persuasion.

Running parallel to this historical process of a social development that increasingly distances human beings from their original state of equality is a process in which one sees the decline of human personality and of the natural character of language, which was originally the immediate expression of sensations and ideas. As an instrument of domination and deception, language became a medium of "paraître," of the appearance that people give themselves in order to disguise their real behavior and thought. Words serve to create a world of appearance, which help gloss over the debasing consequences of social inequality: "Every class, every occupation has its own particular vocabulary to equip its vices with decent phrases."<sup>46</sup>

The opposition between "être" and "paraître" that Rousseau used to characterize modern forms of society thus corresponds to the polarity of "action" and "parole," or a new, sociocritical variant of the traditional opposition between "les mots" and "les choses." "[P]robity doesn't exist any more except in words...and the more decadent the souls are, the more care is applied to the choice and purity of words."<sup>47</sup> Rousseau saw in the guarantee of political justice a precondition for the eradication of the opposition between "être" and "paraître" and thus for an unfalsified linguistic usage, as Diderot and Helvétius had similarly demanded on the basis of political freedom.

I have already pointed out Domergue's conviction that the liberating work of the Revolution had finally created the possibility of eliminating the "abus des mots." Compared to the previous decades, the Revolution had lent new relevance to the debate about the socially and politically motivated meanings of words, which themselves were thematized as an "abus des mots" and as the opposition between "mots" and "choses." Advocates as well as opponents of the Revolution accused one another of falsifying language and of using the abuse of words for their own political purposes. Representatives of the counter-Revolution even described the "abus des mots" as an instrument of seducing the people and thus a cause of the revolutionary upheavals.

In the following, I quote from a number of writers who emphasized the "power of the word" with respect to the key concepts of the Revolution. A distorted use of the word "liberté" could serve, they thought, to enslave the people again. At the same time, we are cautioned from assigning an erroneous

meaning to the word “aristocrate” that would empty this leading word of the Revolution of its equally revolutionary content. Knowledge of the true meaning of this word had inspired the advocates of the Revolution—those whom others were then attempting to discredit as “incendiaire” and thus to cripple their revolutionary élan. These are all sentiments that arose from the discovery that the “abuse of words” had always been one of the main instruments of oppressing peoples. In this text, the term “abus” is alternately used for the misuse of words and for the designation of other abuses that the Revolution was supposed to eliminate. In this respect, too, the Enlightenment provided the terminology of the revolution:

The *abuse of words* has always been one of the principal means by which the people have been enslaved... Let us protect ourselves, therefore, *citizens*, from letting ourselves be *abused by words*; when the executive power succeeded in imposing it on us in the sense of certain expressions, it seemed to make a *thing*, and it created another; and little by little it was loading us with chains in speaking to us of *liberty*.

The word *aristocrat* contributed nothing less to the Revolution than the cockade. Its meaning is today very broad; it applies to all those who live in *abuse*, who long for *abuses*, or who wish to create new *abuses*. The *aristocrats* sought to persuade us that this word had become insignificant: we did not fall into the trap; and the light dawns little by little in the retreats of the aristocracy, their henchmen perceived that they were lost, if they could not find a word the *magic power* of which would destroy the *power of the word aristocrat*.

We do not know if this cost them great exertion; but we know that our *password* is counterbalanced today by that of *incendiary*, and that with the help of certain threats that accompanied it, of certain vexations that follow hard upon it, the excellent citizens are numb with terror.<sup>48</sup>

The followers of the Revolution thus thought it necessary to emphasize that it was not sufficient merely to introduce new words without eliminating the ideas for which the old words served as vehicles. A long-standing situation must therefore not simply be cloaked in new revolutionary terms. The designation “commune,” for example, can make it seem as if one were speaking of the true representation of a sovereign people, whereas in reality one is speaking of the “municipalité.” Such a confusion of words would result in the confusion of things and enable a corporate entity to usurp the rights that are due to the people alone:

It is necessary, in order to make a good law anew, to abandon not only the *old words*, but the *old ideas* attached to them.

It is the municipality and not the commune that the assembly saw before it. One should not inject *confusion into words* for a people who are born to liberty; this would soon lead to a confusion of *things*; and the

*commune*, that is to say the inhabitants taken collectively, would get used to seeing, perhaps, the *municipality* affecting all the rights, monopolizing all the powers, which do not belong to anyone but them.<sup>49</sup>

It was equally an attempt to mislead when one calls the king the "premier fonctionnaire public," instead of retaining the old designation of "roi," as indeed the mere use of new terms in the "Assemblée Nationale" is characterized in general as a means of deception that continues to be practiced:

I observe that one of the means familiarly employed in this assembly in order to *confound our ideas* is always to make use of *new expressions*: "first public functionary" is said instead of "King," "dynasty" instead of "reigning house": you have borrowed the language of the Chinese.<sup>50</sup>

The "correct" meaning of the word "people" is, after all, so important for the thought and actions of human beings that every misuse of the word would have to be punished:

*[M]en conduct themselves by words*, words must then express precisely that which one wishes them to signify.... If the *false use of the word* "people" was, for the wicked, a pretext and a means, it was an opportunity for the simple-minded and credulous. It would be timely if the "Assemblée Nationale" ceased this *cause of disorder* and one should call *very strictly to order* whomsoever used *the word people in any other sense than that which it ought to have*.<sup>51</sup>

It goes without saying that the representatives of the counter-Revolution also claimed that their opponents practiced the abuse of words, for instance in the form of varying designations for the National Assembly with which the revolutionaries insulted the king—the "true sovereign"—and which are supposed to indicate the ostensible sovereignty of the people; but the defenders of the "ancien régime" felt that the people could be nothing more than an "apparent sovereign":

It is unbelievable how much the orators of the "Assemblée Nationale" abused ideas and opinions, and have, since its inception, continued to abuse them: they persuaded it, according to circumstance, at one time that it was the *constituted body*, sometimes the *constituting body*, sometimes the *national convention*, and thus, by a simple selection of appellation, they have caused the confusion of all powers, the forgetting of its origin, and the crime of *lese majesty* [*lèse-majesté*], at one and the same time towards its *true sovereign*, the *King*, and towards its *puppet sovereign*, the *People*.<sup>52</sup>

The return to order desired by the conservative forces both during and after the Revolution necessarily included criticism of revolutionary

terminology as an abuse of words. An example of counter-revolutionary criticism of the new political language is provided by Laharpe in his brochure *Du fanatisme dans la langue révolutionnaire, ou de la persécution suscitées par les barbares du dix-huitième siècle, contre la Religion Chrétienne et ses ministres* of 1797.

As a corrective to revolutionary language, Morellet also proposed new definitions of words as early as the 1790s in a series of publications for the *Mercur de France* entitled “Le Définisseur.” He believed that the false notions about the meanings of such expressions as “dette publique,” and “circulation de la richesse nationale” are to blame when governments and peoples suffer from enormous tax burdens. A good lexicographer would be the best teacher of humanity because he would be able to spare people many errors by ensuring that only correct meanings are connected with words.<sup>53</sup>

Morellet initially proposed a list of fifty terms whose precise definition should contribute to a more harmonious condition of humanity. On the list are such words as “aristocratie, démocratie, richesse, propriété, liberté, égalité, luxe, monopole, peuple, vertu, grandeur nationale,” etc. Morellet believed that the precise definition of these words would prevent a great deal of harm. Thus, a “correct” understanding of the words “liberté” and “propriété” would have prevented the people from infringing on these holy rights and the “propriétaires” would not have been forced “to defend their property against a greedy and poor populace and their liberty and life against assassins united as a committee of public health” (“à défendre leurs biens contre une populace avide et pauvre et leur liberté et leur vie contre les assassins réunis en comité de salut public”).<sup>54</sup> Morellet was candid enough to accept the objection of a critic who claimed that his definitions served the interest of the governing powers by arguing, in return, that he thus proved that they are in the interest of humanity. When Morellet rejected the use of “souverain” inspired by Rousseau and used in the language spoken by advocates of the Revolution to designate the people, and on the other hand attempted to restore the use of “sujet” as the designation for the subjects of the king, he was aware that he was trying to change things solely by using words: “those who strive to abolish *the old phrases* at the same time bear a grudge toward the *old way*” (“ceux qui s’efforcent d’abolir d’*anciennes locutions*, en veulent en même temps à la *chose ancienne*”).<sup>55</sup>

From the opposite end of the political spectrum, offering an entirely different answer to the problems addressed by Morellet, Babeuf used a series of typical expressions of the revolutionary period to illustrate his remark that the same words can have opposite meanings in the “language of the palaces” and the “language of the cottages,” as for example the words “anarchistes,” “factieux,” “désorganiseurs.” Thus, the “powers of the day” (“puissants du jour”) are accused of abusing words by insisting on calling something a “révolution” that was in reality a “contrerévolution.”<sup>56</sup> Rousseau’s observation

that language serves to further social interests in a society characterized by social contradictions was therefore merely clothed in a new phrase based on the experience of the Revolution. For it had already occurred during the course of the eighteenth century that the discussion of the "abus des mots," or the criticism of language, had increasingly become a vehicle for the larger aims of social criticism.

## 13 Language and knowledge: theoretical sources of the “Linguistic Relativity” of cognition

The discussion about the “abuse of words” primarily reflected practical efforts to use language effectively in the dissemination of truth and was directed toward the modes of communication in the debates of the Enlightenment. By problematizing the role language played in cognition, sensualism doubtlessly contributed to stimulating interest in the numerous aspects of the relationship obtaining between linguistic signs and ideas.<sup>1</sup>

In the following, I will be concerned with theoretical attempts to comprehend the relationship between language and thought. It has often been overlooked in studies devoted to these works that they represent a historical source of modern notions concerning the cognitive function of language, such as the assumptions of a “world-view of language” and of the “linguistic relativity of cognition.”

The problematization of the connection between language and thought in relation to anthropological and ethnological perspectives in our century led repeatedly to the formation of hypotheses concerning the role language plays in the development of specific representational and cognitive modes within a given linguistic community. In its extreme manifestation, these sorts of ideas resulted in the assumption that human beings were fixed by their respective language into a particular perspective on reality, into what has been termed a linguistically determined “world-view.” Given these presuppositions, languages became seen as the bearers of various “worldviews” that formed the consciousness of the individual members of a linguistic community. Such theories were advanced in the twentieth century by various linguists, representatives of general semantics and logical positivism, as well as by advocates of both analytical philosophy and the different varieties of neo-Kantianism.<sup>2</sup> Common to all of these hypotheses is that they resolve the dialectically contradictory unity of language and thought into an overemphasis on language.<sup>3</sup>

Leo Weisgerber was a representative of this linguistic world-view thesis in German linguistics. He postulated a “linguistic intermediate world” that stands between the objects of perception in the external world and the cognitive subject. He thus assumed that thought and behavior were predetermined by

linguistic categories, for the system of categories and concepts that are fixed by and in language determine intellectual perspectives and habits of thought.<sup>4</sup>

Benjamin L. Whorf advanced an anthropologically-oriented variant of the hypothesis that defined the function of language as directing and determining cognition and he called this the “linguistic principle of relativity.” Whorf, who worked intensively on the language and culture of Native American Indians, and in particular on that of the Hopi, saw himself confronted by the problem that the Hopi language did not possess any forms to express concepts of time, which to his mind was the cause for the Hopi having a conceptual world that deviated from our notions of space and time. Whorf reasoned that, just as it would be possible to assume an unlimited number of non-Euclidean geometries that provide a no less perfect description of spatial structures, so too there could exist conceptions of the world that did not possess the concepts of time and space with which we are familiar.<sup>5</sup> According to Whorf, a linguistic science that included the meaning of linguistic signs could in the hands of an anthropologist become a magnifying lens through which the mentality, the culture and world-view of a particular linguistic community would become visible.<sup>6</sup>

Modern theoreticians most frequently cite Wilhelm von Humboldt as the precursor of the notion that there is a linguistically formed world-view. The question has only been rarely raised about the theoretical sources of the world-view hypothesis before Humboldt and has only recently drawn any interest at all. Today there can be no doubt about Humboldt’s indebtedness to the linguistic theories of the Enlightenment.<sup>7</sup>

The active role language plays in the cognitive process was a topic that, for the thinkers of the Enlightenment, closely touched on the problem of the origin of language and the “abuse of language.” As a result of the Enlightenment’s head-on attack against rationalistic a priorism, Humboldt reinterpreted the assumption that there was an active role of language in the cognitive process.

An empirical impetus for considering the specificity of individual languages came from some comments that were made in the seventeenth century regarding comparative linguistics. During the last third of that century, the “*génie de la langue*” became something of a fashionable notion that was used in normative descriptions of the French language, and not without the tendency to argue for the national language.<sup>8</sup> For our purposes, the location of the problem regarding the specificity of individual languages within philosophical contexts is more important.

Beginning with the discrepancy between the imperfection of the physical sign and non-corporeal thoughts, rationalistic linguistic critics pointed out the opposition between the universality of thought and the specificity of particular languages. Postulating this fundamental difference necessarily had to exclude the assumption that language played a constitutive role in cognition. The Port-Royal *Logic* even cited the differences between languages as proof of the language-free existence of cognition. How, the

authors asked, could Arabs and the French communicate with one another and exchange ideas if these ideas were dependent on their two so very different languages?<sup>9</sup> From the perspective of the rationalists, the variety of individual languages was thus an argument for the independence of cognition from language. The same rationalistic view inspired the notion that the Romans spoke differently from the way they thought since Latin word order deviated from the “natural” sequence of thoughts. As long as one presupposed that cognition took place independently of language, any consideration of the influence language might have on language took on the aspect of a warning against the negative influence of language. We have already seen examples of this in Descartes and the Port-Royal *Logic*.

Despite his basically sensualistic orientation, Bacon also granted to language no more than a secondary character in relation to the forms of cognition and he therefore did not go essentially further than the Port-Royal *Logic* when he claimed that language can mislead people. The “*idola fori*” are propagated by the designation of these phantom images and they are in some cases even forced on the understanding. Thus we are led astray by the words we believe we control, but which can operate contrary to the understanding. Similarly, he believed that the sophistic language of the sciences was one of the main causes of the sterility of scholasticism.<sup>10</sup> Bacon thus saw here a correlation between scientific language and a style of thought that was at least partially determined by its negative influence. In what would more properly be called an ethnological sense he considered individual languages to be formally differentiated expressions of the human mind that permitted one to deduce the peculiarities and customs of particular linguistic communities.<sup>11</sup>

Of greater significance for the conception of the relationship between language and thought is Hobbes’s sensualistic argument against Descartes, namely that cognition possibly takes place by means of linguistic signs and is in some way essentially bound to them.<sup>12</sup> Vico’s remark concerning both the dependence of thought on language and the specificity of individual languages should also probably be seen in connection with his opposition to Cartesian rationalism in general.<sup>13</sup>

Leibniz studied the relationship between signs and ideas over a long period of time, both before and after the appearance of Locke’s *Essay*. As in the case of Bacon and Locke, Leibniz also believed that one could draw certain conclusions about the way a people thinks from its language:

It is well-known that language is a mirror of the understanding and that when a people raises its understanding to great heights it simultaneously uses its language well, a phenomenon for which the Greeks, Romans, and Arabs all provide numerous examples.<sup>14</sup>

Leibniz’s doctrine of prestabilized harmony, on the basis of which he explained the relationship between language and reality, led him to reject

Locke's assumption that linguistic signs arbitrarily combine simple ideas. By viewing ideas as being present in God and even in human beings from the beginning of time, Leibniz affirmed the existence of innate ideas even though he believed that they had yet to be discovered.<sup>15</sup> For Leibniz, the connection between the language and thought of peoples thus also did not entail a constitutive role of language in the acquisition of knowledge, despite his conviction concerning the necessity of appropriate signs for the clarity and precision of cognition. The multiplicity of languages is, analogous to the multiplicity of monads, a manifold reflection of the world.<sup>16</sup> In this sense, Leibniz expected to gather information leading toward the better understanding of reality and of human cognitive processes by recording and comparing the vocabularies and grammars of various languages.<sup>17</sup>

The relationship between individual languages and thought gained a new relevance within the sensualistic epistemology of Locke, who used the difference between languages and the variations in thought that result from them as an argument against the rationalistic assumption of innate ideas. Complex human ideas depend substantially on the immediate environment, customs, and habits. This environment, as well as the needs and habits one acquires in dealing with the objects and phenomena of life, determine which complex ideas are fixed by linguistic signs.<sup>18</sup> If certain combinations of ideas occur only infrequently in the life of a people inhabiting a particular region, then they will not acquire any specific designation. In this case it is simpler to enumerate the individual ideas when they are perceived simultaneously than to burden the memory with additional complex ideas and their names.

The variations between languages in the way they organize perceptions into complex ideas by assigning them corresponding designations shows that nature does not provide ready-made concepts. Rather, concepts are acquired and named only through abstraction.<sup>19</sup> Locke cited the example of the difference between ice and water to illustrate the connection between the words of a language and the conceptual world of its speakers. The designations "ice" and "water" allowed every Englishman to distinguish between two different things. A person who grows up in Jamaica, however, would see ice and water as being the same thing as long as that person knew no designation for ice.<sup>20</sup> The various numerical systems of different peoples illustrated, according to Locke, the connection between linguistic signs and the state of knowledge. Calculations can go only as far as there are numerals available, and it was here that the greatest difference was noticed, particularly in comparison to newly discovered peoples. This often-quoted example of the connection between language and thought had already been familiar to the sixteenth century.<sup>21</sup> Locke explained the lack of linguistic signs for numbers above twenty by referring to the conditions of life and the modest requirements of the people in question.<sup>22</sup>

Often, however, Locke went so far as to claim that the cause of certain inadequacies and limitations of thought is located in language itself. For example, he thought that it was difficult to perceive connections between

things for which there are no names.<sup>23</sup> Finally, Locke also expressed the opinion that words stand between our understanding and the objects of knowledge and can thus veil truth.<sup>24</sup>

Locke's initial steps toward viewing language as an instrument of cognition thus focused his efforts above all on describing its negative influence on the understanding, hence his attention to the abuse of words and his extensive treatment of the subject. We have already seen that Locke's dualism of sensation and reflection, together with the assumption of an a priori capacity of thought, prevented him from acknowledging a constitutive role of language in cognition and that representatives of a more thoroughgoing sensualism reproached him for having stopped half-way in this respect. Locke's critique of language, like his contradictory sensualism in general, subsequently developed in opposite directions for which, on the one hand, Condillac and Diderot, and, on the other, Berkeley can be seen as representatives.

In a fashion entirely in keeping with his agnosticism, Berkeley developed an extreme form of nominalism and accused Locke of having trusted language too much.<sup>25</sup> Language, Berkeley argued, is the greatest obstacle blocking the path leading toward the acquisition of knowledge and for that reason right thinking must entirely dispense with it in order to view one's own ideas immediately.<sup>26</sup> Trusting in language, according to Berkeley, is already a mistake because it only reflects the opinion of the crowd.<sup>27</sup> The most grave consequence language has for the process of cognition was, in Berkeley's view, that linguistic signs are the cause for assuming that matter exists outside of the perceiving subject.<sup>28</sup> Words designate nothing more, he claimed, than a multitude of single ideas that correspond to the impressions of the subject and only make it seem as if one were dealing with abstractions of objects that actually exist. One example cited by Berkeley concerning the deceptive influence of language was later often quoted: statements such as "the sun rises," "the sun sets" impart an entirely false notion of the actual state of affairs. Whoever is convinced of the correctness of the Copernican view of the universe would silently perform a correction of the meaning of these terms which is only possible, however, because the gaping chasm between language and reality is especially evident here. In other cases, the door is left wide open for linguistically generated errors.<sup>29</sup> We will see that Berkeley's notions were reflected in theoretical discussions of language in France and were also set in opposition to Condillac's sensualism with respect to the epistemological evaluation of language.

Condillac's thesis of the simultaneously communicative and cognitive function of language asked the question of the degree to which cognition depended on language from an entirely new perspective. The sensualistic postulate of the interdependence of language and thought and the acknowledgement of language as the primary instrument of intellectual analysis substantiate the claim in a significantly broader way than one finds

in either Locke or Leibniz, namely that by improving language and other sign systems that are instruments of thought one improves thought itself. Articulated phonetic language has a function for thinking similar to that of mathematical signs in calculations. Just as the development of mathematical signs is at once the expression and instrument of mathematical thinking, so too do language and other adequate sign systems enable us to fix and combine ideas, that is they make creative cognitive activity possible. Beyond the expression of what is already known, linguistic signs thus permit the discovery of what is not yet known. "It is with languages as it is with the ciphers of mathematics: they are able to open new horizons and broaden the mind to the degree of their perfection."<sup>30</sup>

Condillac saw language in its entirety as a necessary function that furthers and even constitutes cognition, whereby vocabulary stands in the foreground of his considerations of the cognitive role of language. We have already seen that Condillac compressed his notion of the cognitive function of signs in comments such as "every language is an analytic method" and "every science or discipline is an accurately constituted language" ("*une langue bien faite*").<sup>31</sup>

The postulate of the unity of the cognitive and communicative functions of language had to raise the question of their specificity within individual languages. The sensualistic problematization of the characteristics of thought that vary from language to language thus became one of the most important theoretical sources of the notion that there is a linguistically determined relativity of thought. With Condillac himself, however, relativistic conclusions were forestalled by his sensualistic explanation of the universality of thought, which he opposed to the theory of innate ideas: "Identical senses, identical operations and identical circumstances would also necessarily bring forth identical effects."<sup>32</sup>

Condillac's reflections on the problem of a linguistically determined relativity of thought arose from his theoretical understanding of language as constitutive of the cognitive process and not from an empirical comparison of languages, as was the case with later advocates of linguistic relativism. However, Condillac's assumption that one's mother tongue formed one's thinking already had broad ramifications. Languages, as "methods of thought," leave their impress on the cognitive habits of their speakers, but they also suggest opinions and prejudices. According to the degree of their perfection, or lack of it, languages can give rise to all that is good or all that is evil in human thought. The imperfection of a language places limits on the activity of thought, whereas a highly developed language can lead to achievements in all areas of knowledge.<sup>33</sup>

In accordance with his evolutionistic conception of sensualism, Condillac saw various historical stages of development in the different degrees of perfection apparent in languages. But the specific nature of a people is also expressed in these differences. Condillac used the traditional term "*génie de la langue*" to designate this specific quality, but this term received a new

meaning since it designated the characteristic way of thinking that a people has fixed in its language. The actual spirit or character of languages consisted in the different ways in which various peoples connected ideas with one another and combined various auxiliary ideas with the “*idée principale*.” This comes about because these languages do not process the same sense impressions in the same manner because of their specific interests and needs, or because of different circumstances.

Condillac clearly accentuated the importance of the social element as a distinguishing characteristic of the “*génie de la langue*.” It is true that every individual’s linguistic performance is affected differently according to the condition of his organs of sense, his needs and interests, as well as his temperament. Thus, every person has his or her own language, to which one cannot however attribute any particular character since it can change very quickly. As soon as an entire people has taken on certain peculiarities, however, the linguistic expression of these is fostered and fixed by the common interest.<sup>34</sup> The character of a language is thus determined by the historically produced character of the respective people, which for its part is affected by its governmental system and the climate. Condillac explicitly placed the importance of the influence of the form of government—that is, expressed in modern terminology, social relations—before the significance of the influence of climate, which in the eighteenth century often served to explain social phenomena. (Charles de Brosses in particular used the climate as an essential factor in his attempt to differentiate languages, even beginning with the formation of sounds.)<sup>35</sup>

In Condillac’s view, language, which he understood as an instrument of both thought and communication, was determined by the experiences of a people and even by the specific types of knowledge that individual professions possessed within given nations. The character of a people can of course, since it is also subject to historical change, only express itself in a language to the degree that its current stage of development will allow; for an arbitrary change in linguistic usage was not possible in Condillac’s opinion. The characteristic qualities of a people, once they have been absorbed by a language, are handed down to succeeding generations. Thus language also does its part to contributing to the preservation of the particular character of a people. The effect of the “*génie de la langue*” on the morals and thought patterns of a people is therefore an aspect of the mutual relationship between language and thought.

Condillac saw an especially important expression of the character of a people in so-called “auxiliary ideas,” which was a means of differentiating the “*idée principale*” from the affective “*idée accessoire*” that had been suggested by the Port-Royal *Logic*. Condillac supplied an example of this phenomenon, whose sociological interpretation is worth considering: in the Roman republic, every citizen, even including the generals, was originally obligated to participate in the cultivation of the land. Thus numerous positive and dignified auxiliary notions became associated with the terminology of

agriculture, which were partially maintained in the language when, in later centuries, the dominance of luxury occurred. When, however, the Franks conquered Gaul, the new ruling class left the cultivation of the soil in present-day France to the peoples they had subjugated. Thus, in French, derogatory associations are combined with the numerous designations for agriculture and rural life.<sup>36</sup>

Language, which is a necessary instrument for fixing, accumulating, and transmitting social knowledge, also contributes to the continuation of erroneous opinions from one generation to the next. Yet, through the constantly repeated analysis of reality, Condillac thought that we can and must strive to attain an agreement between linguistic meanings and the true nature of things.

The character and intellectual habits of a nation are thus not fixed in its language for all time. Rather, a nation can in the course of its historical experience transform its language in order to conform to this experience. Human beings thus have the task of understanding the interdependence of language and thought as a constant challenge to the habitual patterns of thought that are handed down through language, and they must allow new experiences that result from the analysis of reality to enter into their language. Condillac accused the philosophers of having contributed too little to this enterprise since they all too often disputed about words instead of investigating things themselves.

All professions can and should contribute, Condillac felt, to the progress of knowledge and to the development of language.<sup>37</sup> The sum of knowledge that is fixed within language about the various professions approximately corresponds to the totality of social needs. Every profession gains new knowledge by precisely observing its appropriate objects and uses language to make this knowledge a common possession of society. This plaidoyer for a democratization of the conception of language resulted from the same attitude that inspired the rehabilitation of artisan professions in the *Encyclopédie*, which was published by men sympathetic to Condillac's ideas, and which performed this rehabilitation not least of all through linguistic means by including the respective professional terminologies in its entries.

Condillac combined his conception of the co-operation of needs, knowledge, and languages into a model by attributing an originary function to needs in the higher development of both knowledge and language.<sup>38</sup> He thought that, as society develops through the stages of animal husbandry and agriculture, up to the formation of the arts and sciences, growing needs stimulate a constantly higher development of both knowledge and language.

One of these three factors can sometimes develop more quickly, but it necessarily implies the enlargement of the other two, so that a dynamic equilibrium exists between needs, level of knowledge, and language, which leads to the constant improvement of all three. The recognition of true needs and the use of language in the interest of advancing thought and science is a

responsibility of society—a sober reminder that Condillac directed at both the ruling parties and the philosophers.

For the most serious retarding factor is not language, whose character as an instrument of knowledge implies the possibility of constant perfection of the same. Rather, it is defects of society itself that prevent the progress of thought and language. “Reason is never hindered by anything other than the defects of the government” (“La raison n’est jamais retardée dans ses progrès que par les vices du gouvernement”).<sup>39</sup>

The dependence of thought on language, as well as the fact that thought is determined by the character of an individual language, thus do not subject people to a linguistically predetermined world-view. Phrases such as “we think in our language and according to our language” (“nous pensons dans notre langue et d’après notre langue”),<sup>40</sup> or “our language influences our manner of thinking and lends it clarity and precision in the degree to which it possesses the same,”<sup>41</sup> are thus confirmation of a social responsibility regarding the use and perfection of the instrument of human knowledge and communication.

The conception of language as such an instrument of communication and of cognitive activity, a tool that is appropriate to the needs of the respective historical stage and culture, also underlay Condillac’s demand for the priority of one’s native language, a demand that had previously been motivated primarily by nationalistic motives and that had attacked the primacy of ancient languages in the educational system.<sup>42</sup> Since thinking first developed in the mother tongue, Condillac thought that thinking within that language could only be led to the level of clarity and precision of which a given talent is capable. But here, too, he was talking about the reciprocity in the relationship between human beings and language, in which the active and conscious role of people can act as a formative influence on language. This is true to a particular degree of people who are geniuses and are able to unfold their extraordinary abilities, initially at least, thanks to the stage of development enjoyed by their native language, but then are able to communicate something of their own way of thinking and feeling to that language. In this way the path to high achievements in the sciences and the arts is also smoothed for those people whose abilities would otherwise remain average.

Diderot was undoubtedly thinking of the sensualistic theory of language, and particularly what it had to say about the role language plays in thought, when he announced that the meaning of the science of signs and sounds had only recently been recognized in its importance for the study of things.<sup>43</sup>

Condillac’s conception of the relationship between language and thought began from assumptions that other sensualistic thinkers used to move in the direction of materialism—the accusation of having been himself materialistic was later the most grave criticism that was repeatedly made of Condillac’s philosophy—and it was a view that presupposed a recognizable, objectively existing external world. Some statements in his *Essai sur l’origine des*

*connaissances humaines* had, after its appearance in 1746, caused Diderot, however, to challenge Condillac to distinguish his position more clearly from that of Berkeley, whose thesis that Being existed only by virtue of being perceived had provided the basic principle of subjective idealism. We have already seen how Berkeley had interpreted the contemporary problem of the abuse of words as a support of his own agnosticism.

Condillac's efforts to place distance between himself and Berkeley, as well as the differentiation between two opposed developments of sensualism, are manifested in the conception of the role that language plays in cognition. That this was one of the first problems that ignited the controversy surrounding these opposed sensualistic camps can come as no surprise in view of the importance of language in sensualistic epistemology for the analytic method.

Two years after Condillac's *Essai* appeared, Maupertuis attempted, in his *Réflexions philosophiques sur l'origine des langues et la signification des mots* (1748), to apply Berkeley's philosophy to the study of the relationship between language and thought. Like Condillac, Maupertuis saw the original material of knowledge in the perceptions, and he viewed language as the instrument, or the method, for performing a comparative analysis of the perceptions. However, various differences emerge with respect to the problem of whether language follows the promptings of the external world in its analysis, or whether it remains left up to the arbitrariness of individual languages to organize the stream of perceptions.

Under the influence of Berkeley, Maupertuis opted for the second alternative and thus came to overemphasize the independence of language and its influence on thought. Maupertuis assumed that languages possessed "intellectual planes" ("plans d'idées"), which determine and organize each language in different ways.<sup>44</sup> Thus a translation from one language to another is not possible. Locke had explained the untranslatability of some words by saying that the concepts in question were simply lacking in other peoples. With Maupertuis's "plans d'idées," however, we are no longer confronted with individual untranslatable words, but with entire systems of linguistic contents.

Thanks to these "plans d'idées," Maupertuis argued, the possibilities of knowledge are differently determined from language to language. The comparison of very different languages would thus result in information about the abilities of the people who speak them to acquire knowledge. If the first sense impressions had been designated in some other way, then the questions of science would have taken a completely different direction.<sup>45</sup> Philosophers who think in languages with different "plans d'idées" thus operate on different intellectual planes and thus cannot find a common language.

Maupertuis also combined the traditional criticism of the abuse of words with his conception of "plans d'idées" and came to the conclusion that the prejudices of the respective linguistic community are inherited along with the

native language.<sup>46</sup> He wrote that an especially clear example of the misleading influence of language on thought can be found in the distinction between “substance” and “modes.”<sup>47</sup> The problematic nature of this division had of course already been discussed before Maupertuis. But Maupertuis wanted to solve the problem by attributing this distinction between substance and modes to language alone. Maupertuis modified Berkeley’s agnostic orientation, which colored his view of the relationship between language and thought, in that Maupertuis saw in the co-operation of scientists working in various mother tongues the possibility of overcoming the boundaries of knowledge that individual languages have erected.<sup>48</sup> By thus referring to the international character of the progress of human knowledge and to the principal equality of various peoples, Maupertuis incorporated two of the main ideas of the Enlightenment into his reflections on the cognitive role of language.

Turgot wrote a response to Maupertuis’s overvaluation of the cognitive role of language in the same year in which he edited a refutation of Berkeley’s system. He viewed the “plans d’idées,” which Maupertuis had described as linguistically determined paths of knowledge, as a pure “invention” of the philosophers.<sup>49</sup> Turgot’s notion that the same organs of sense must lead under similar circumstances to the same ideas, an idea that Condillac had suggested to him, excluded the possibility of assuming the existence of linguistically determined ideational levels, which would close off our direct access to external reality.

At the same time, Turgot did not fail to recognize the differences in the experiences manifested in language and the problems associated with that. He saw the predominant activity of a people at the time at which its language originated as an important factor in differentiating language and thought, and he explained the differences in thinking by making reference to a series of social factors. Turgot also granted to different languages and their peculiarities an influence on thought,<sup>50</sup> but it was an influence that could not go as far as a determination of any “plans d’idées,” since human knowledge is oriented toward the external world and can thus correct and elaborate the ideas fixed in language.

Condillac also expressed criticism of Maupertuis’s thesis. In the middle of his work on the *Traité des sensations*—in which, following Diderot’s challenge, he delimited his position relative to a idealistic interpretation of sensualism more decisively than before—he communicated to Maupertuis his objections.<sup>51</sup> The linguistic conclusions that Maupertuis had drawn from Berkeley’s subjective idealistic doctrine were even suited to lending Diderot’s challenge to Condillac additional weight.

In Condillac’s opinion, Maupertuis’s primary error had been his overemphasis on language and his insufficient explanation of the actual degree to which thought was dependent on language. Condillac allowed that in his *Essai sur l’origine des connaissances humaines* he himself had not completely escaped an overemphasis of language and had given signs too

much meaning. He criticized Maupertuis's notion of determined "plans d'idées" because it ignored the fact that the equality of the senses and the similarity of human needs excluded the emergence of such great differences in thought.

Condillac interpreted Maupertuis's attempt to accommodate linguistic theory to subjective idealism as a warning about the dangers of absolutizing the role of language in thought, but not so that one would entirely do without the assumption that there was some cognitive function in sign use or would discard its central importance for sensualistic epistemology. On the contrary, the interdependence of language and thought remained a fundamental topic in the rest of his later works.

Initially, however, the discussion of the interdependence of language and thought reached a climax in the Berlin Academy. The prize topic for the year 1759, and the interest devoted to related subjects in the following years, which resulted in the prize topic about the origin of language, illustrate the attraction of the questions raised by sensualistic language theory in France.

The announcement of the prize topic explicitly arose from such considerations of the reciprocal relationship between language and thought. It demanded the investigation of the "influence of the opinion of the people on language as well as of the influence of language on the opinions of the people," and finally demanded suggestions for eliminating the defects of language. The prize was awarded to the essay by Johann David Michaelis, entitled *Beantwortung der Frage von dem Einfluß der Meinungen in die Sprache und der Sprache in die Meinungen* ("Answer to the Question about the Influence of Opinions on Language and of Language on Opinions"), who proved to be well informed about the preceding debates about language.

Michaelis saw the connection between the level of knowledge and language from the perspective of a democratic conception of language, one that enlarged upon Condillac's remarks about the contribution that different social classes made to the general development of language by including not only "uneducated" speakers, but children as well among those who play a role in forming language and enrich its store of ideas. Michaelis viewed every individual language as

a collection of wisdom and of the genius of entire peoples to which everyone has given his own: not just the scholar, who often has a small genius, and more often is prevented by prejudice from discovering something new, and in the end only constitutes one hundredth part of humanity, but rather the clever normal person who, as it were, lives closer to nature; thus not merely that person whose thoughts were adopted by the multitude, but also the heretic who stands farther apart; indeed, even the child, whose genius is the most lively and is the least limited by prejudice, and which often finds the truth through bold

associations of ideas—all of these pay their dues to the general treasury of the people.<sup>52</sup>

To be sure, Michaelis did not think that everyone would be able to effect a real linguistic change, for the “highest authority” of a language are the people themselves, who can either accept or reject an innovation. The opposition of this conception to traditional elitist notions of language was thus obviously influenced by Rousseau.

Michaelis gave the formative influence of language on the cognitive habits of a people a partly negative, and partly positive, value. This influence of language is advantageous when a wealth of words is present in a language, which:

must go so far so that every and anything that a person can think has its own distinct indigenous word, so that it can be designated without any long circumlocution: indeed, so that one is able to imagine it from more than one perspective.<sup>53</sup>

On the other hand, in botany the lack of transregional German designations for plants has a negative effect since one cannot communicate with a simple peasant by using Latin terms and thus cannot learn from him.<sup>54</sup> The necessity of an adequate number of linguistic signs for thought in mathematics becomes especially apparent. Only those peoples whose language and thought have reached a level that provides designations for larger numbers can develop mathematicians.<sup>55</sup>

The lack of neutral designations for certain concepts is also disadvantageous for thought, since negative or positive designations entrench prejudices. Thus there is no value-free word in German, for example, for the French word “*le luxe*” (the concept and phenomenon of luxury were the object of an extensive debate in social criticism during the Enlightenment that was fueled by moral and economic considerations), and words such as “opulence” already imply negative judgments.<sup>56</sup> According to Michaelis, etymologies can eternalize errors just as easily as they can immortalize truths, and in this capacity they can sway the opinion and behavior of the speakers of a language.

Although Michaelis described in detail the negative influence that language has on the opinions of a people, he did not want this to be overemphasized. False metaphors and etymologies, the poverty or the unnecessary abundance of language, always develop in conjunction with a false way of thinking, but they can under certain circumstances have an even longer and more tenacious effect on language. Errors of thought are less caused by language than they are conserved by it.<sup>57</sup>

Michaelis’s conception of the historical conditions that operate in and on language, but which also make it possible and help it to develop by making it an ever more suitable instrument of thought, was decisively influenced by the French Enlightenment, just as his adoption of the concept of a “genius of

a language” was. But Michaelis paid even closer and more detailed attention to certain linguistic categories than Condillac and Diderot had done.

Even the means that Michaelis proposed for the avoidance of linguistically preserved errors show their derivation from the preceding discussion of language. He recommended that one ought not to place blind faith in etymologies and proverbs,<sup>58</sup> he suggested that one seek to spread one’s native language and argued for everyone’s right to work creatively with language, provided that one observed its “genius.”

In the meantime, something can be done for the improvement of false etymologies, namely that everyone invents other, more correct expressions and places them next to the false ones. Everyone should be allowed to do this who speaks that language: he has, by using the language, the right to make new words and phrases, but only those that are appropriate to the genius of the language, and only if they do not become too numerous.<sup>59</sup>

Michaelis’s work soon found resonance in many European countries that themselves also stood under the influence of the French Enlightenment. Two years after it had been published in a collection together with the other seven entries to the prize contest<sup>60</sup> a French translation appeared that contained many additions;<sup>61</sup> a Dutch translation and two editions of an English version followed.<sup>62</sup> De Brosses was inspired by Michaelis to consider the question of the relationship between language and thought, as well as social factors in the development of language, and the Italians Cesarotti and Galeani Napione explicitly referred to him.<sup>63</sup> Finally, on d’Alembert’s recommendation Michaelis was offered a position at the Berlin Academy, which he did not, however, accept.

We know that Michaelis did not recommend in vain to the academy that it pose the question “how a language could arise among people who previously did not have a language, and which gradually achieved its present perfection.”<sup>64</sup> When this suggestion was finally taken up in the prize question for the year 1770, it was remarkable that almost all entries that received commendation combined elements of a psychological view of language and some consideration of the relationship between language and thought with the problem of the origin of language.<sup>65</sup> A number of entries, not least of all Herder’s prize winning essay itself, make clear that the question about the origin of language was at the same time a question about its relationship to thought.

Herder had already considered these problems in his earlier writings. In his *Fragments on Recent German Literature* (1766–7) he had, with explicit reference to Michaelis, raised various questions about the relationship between language and the “distinctive aspects in the lives and thoughts” of peoples.<sup>66</sup> With his phrase, which he first formulated in the *Fragments*, that “language is an instrument of the sciences,”<sup>67</sup> he established a direct link

with Condillac's language theory, which is also true of his contention that language was the medium in which thought takes place:

If it is true that we cannot think without thoughts and learn to think through words, then language gives human knowledge its limits and outline... We think in language, we may explain what is there, or look for what is not yet there.<sup>68</sup>

Herder's treatise on the origin of language is based on the same fundamental conception of the relationship between language and thought, but he accentuated it differently because of his anthropological orientation. "Besonnenheit," or that quality which raises human beings out of the animal kingdom, is for Herder the source of both reflection and of language. After it has been developed, language also acts beneficially on "Besonnenheit." With his determination of a close connection between the cognitive peculiarities of a people and its language,<sup>69</sup> his insistence on the equality of the cognitive capacities displayed by different languages and his emphasis on progress in the mutual development of language and thought Herder thus took up ideas from the discussion of language in the French Enlightenment; this is also true of his treatment of the topic of the abuse of words and of his explanation of the store of synonyms based on social needs for signification.

In the same years in which Herder was formulating his conception of the interdependence of language and thought, the mathematician and philosopher Johann Heinrich Lambert, who was also associated with the Berlin Academy, was occupied with the relationship between signs and ideas. In two comprehensive epistemological works that appeared in 1764 and 1771, Lambert attempted to describe a systematic "semiotics." The title of the first of these two works, *New Organon, or Thoughts on the Investigation and Designation of the True and how to distinguish it from Error and Appearance*, underscores his intention to found scientific knowledge on a science of signs, which he saw as the basis of thought. He felt that semiotics should first of all be concerned with the question of whether language makes truth less accessible and more doubtful or places more obstacles in the path of the search for truth.<sup>70</sup> Lambert saw the problem of the correctness of linguistic signs in an epistemological and a pragmatic sense. Words are only correct, he thought, when they lead people, if possible without any detours, to the knowledge of things or concepts.

The words of a language, whose most important task consists in being the means of "symbolic knowledge," have, as a constitutive element in the formation of concepts, a conservative influence on the results of the cognitive process.<sup>71</sup> Moreover,

[T]his rather fixed number of words in a language places limits on knowledge, with respect to its extension, and thus gives it its own form or

shape, which certainly has an influence on truth itself, and...would deserve the investigation of a philosopher.<sup>72</sup>

Borrowing from the French debate about language, Lambert also spoke of the “genius of a language,” on the basis of which languages “name things for the most part only from a certain perspective.”<sup>73</sup> Thus, “they also expose only this perspective, and bring about other ways of uncovering other aspects of things, whereby every language again will take its own course.”<sup>74</sup> In his prize-essay, Herder also referred soon thereafter to the semiotic reflections in Lambert’s *New Organon*.

The influence of the ideas being discussed in France during the eighteenth century concerning the problem of the relationship between language and thought was not limited to Germany alone. In Italy, where the dissemination of Condillac’s doctrine was connected with the long tradition associated with the “questione della lingua,” there was also a discussion of the problem about how the words of a language can determine the ways in which its speakers think.<sup>75</sup> In the eighteenth century the effort to re-evaluate the Italian language relative to other languages was connected with the tendency to view the essence of language in an immediate connection with the culture and history of peoples and to recognize individual languages as specific instruments of thought. The dynamic of the particular character of a language and its constant development in conformity with the demands of the cognitive process were very heavily accentuated.<sup>76</sup>

In England, too, the suggestions taken from Locke and from French sensualistic theories were developed with regard to the relationship between language and thinking.<sup>77</sup> Thus, psychological considerations stemming from theories of association led to the affirmation of a relationship between the differences of languages and various differences in the cognitive process.<sup>78</sup> By comparing languages the possibility presented itself of the mutual improvement of those languages, whereby errors in human thinking could be corrected. Operating according to entirely different philosophical and epistemological assumptions, English neo-Platonism also contributed to the elaboration of the conceptual pair “form and matter” with respect to the development of the linguistically based relativity of thought. The “form,” which organizes the sensate “matter,” is both “external” and in this sense identical with the objects of reality, as well as “internal.”<sup>79</sup> The “internal form,” understood as the manner in which reality is reflected, is not assumed to be the same for all languages, for every language has its own “genius,” which includes a form-giving principle.<sup>80</sup> Although the connection between the particular cognitive habits of peoples with the “genius of the language” is described by citing copious examples,<sup>81</sup> the neo-Platonic assumption that there was a primacy of ideas decreased the possibility of deriving new insights into the role language plays in the cognitive process from the conception of an “internal form.”

The concept of form in neo-Platonism was taken up again in the later

development of the conception of the linguistic relativity of thought. We know from a letter to Schiller in 1795 that Wilhelm von Humboldt knew and admired Harris's *Hermes*, one of the main works on language theory that belonged to this tradition.<sup>82</sup> Harris's application of the concept of "inner form" to language, in which he indicated that there was a distinction between "work" and "energy," was well suited to supplementing Kant's epistemological ideas about distinguishing between form and matter. But an especially important mediating role between the Enlightenment and Wilhelm von Humboldt's language theory was played by the Ideologues, who were influenced by Condillac's sensualism, but who tried to make it conform to the new philosophical and political situation in post-revolutionary France. Around the turn of the century the Ideologues expanded Condillac's doctrine of the active role of language in the cognitive process and of the constitutive function of signs for thought and gave these ideas new and subtle expression, and they even posed the problem of the influence of signs on human knowledge as an academic prize question again. The modifications of the sensualistic language theory of the Enlightenment that were undertaken by the Ideologues even included a biological understanding of language, as well as the adoption of spiritualistic notions.

Common to the varied conceptions held by the individual Ideologues was the conviction that the study of language was an important part of a "science of humanity" as a whole. During his Paris sojourn, and while enjoying direct contact with the Ideologues, Wilhelm von Humboldt came to the conclusion that language would have to occupy a key position in any comparative anthropology.<sup>83</sup> The founding of the "Société des observateurs de l'homme" in 1799 institutionalized the Ideologues' interest in contributing to such a "science of humanity" by undertaking investigations into the essence of language, its biological foundations and functions, studies on etymology and lexicology in which the geographical, historical, and cultural experiences of peoples were taken into consideration.

In the following chapter I will discuss in more detail the historical context in which the Ideologues worked with special emphasis on the problem of the linguistic relativity of thought.

## 14 The French Enlightenment and its aftermath: linguistic theory and language debates from the Enlightenment to the Restoration

One important concern of the Revolution was the deliberate dissemination of the “langue nationale,”<sup>1</sup> which was conducted at great expense, and to insure that it prevailed over the regional variations of French.<sup>2</sup> But, owing in large part to the influence of the Ideologues, the role of language teaching and of other subjects pertaining to the study of language theory in education placed new questions about language itself on the revolutionary agenda. For the Ideologues attempted to make their scientific theory, which they had derived from Enlightenment sensualism, into a kind of official philosophy.

At one level, public disagreement among political opponents contributed to an increased consciousness about the role of language in the political struggle and in the shaping of public opinion, and it thus reflected the linguistic problems raised by the revolutionary turmoil. Playing a part in this change was the recognition that one and the same expression could have diametrically opposed meanings, depending on the social and political standpoint of those using the word. This problem contributed to the even greater relevance of the issues connected with the “abuse of words,” the discussion of which during the years of the Revolution I have already shown from the point of view of both the advocates as well as the opponents of the Revolution.

Closely aligned with this topic as well was the debate about neology, which also continued an eighteenth-century tradition with an intensity that was only heightened by the Revolution. Ever since the first edition of Desfontaines’s highly regarded anti-neological dictionary, *Dictionnaire néologique à l’usage des beaux-esprits du siècle*, in 1726, there was a seemingly never-ending philosophical conflict, in which positions were assumed both for and against enriching language by adding new words, or by appending meanings to words, and this debate often exceeded a purely linguistic frame of reference and touched upon philosophical, literary, and social issues and were even motivated by the same.<sup>3</sup>

The years of the Revolution brought about a high point in the creation of both new words and meanings of words. Intense neological activity is evident in the great number of words created for newly coined concepts, and this activity was enhanced by an awareness that a linguistic renewal was

under way that was being manifested in a variety of ways: as a way of treating the principles of lexical innovations; as a debate for and against individual terms; in the form of supplements to dictionaries that ostensibly only wanted to register additions to vocabulary; in the form of word lists and dictionaries that made no secret of their affirmation or rejection of the Revolution and in the latter case already announced by their titles their devaluation of the neologisms brought forth by the Revolution. I have already pointed out Laharpe and Morellet as representatives of counter-revolutionary language criticism. On the other side of the issue, Robespierre personally intervened in the debate about the use of revolutionary terminology and suggested, for example, that one stop using the word "Jacobins" because this name for the advocates of the Revolution had taken on a pejorative meaning through its defamatory use in the mouths of their opponents. Robespierre thus suggested instead that his followers retain the unambiguous title of "Société des Amis de la Constitution."<sup>4</sup>

Two prominent representatives of the interest in linguistic problems during the years immediately following the Revolution were Urbain Domergue and Louis-Sébastien Mercier. I will thus discuss these two characteristic figures, who took part in the contemporary discussion of language, before turning to the Ideologues. Since in both of the following sections on Urbain Domergue and Louis-Sébastien Mercier the issue mainly concerns "néologie," I have provided the original French of the English translations in the notes.

### THE "GRAMMAIRIEN-PATRIOTE" URBAIN DOMERGUE

Urbain Domergue,<sup>5</sup> who, as opposed to Louis-Sébastien Mercier, is almost completely forgotten, was a tireless advocate of the theoretical and practical engagement with language and has undeservedly slipped into obscurity. Without having had the theoretical ambitions of the Ideologues, Urbain Domergue played a remarkable role during the Revolution as a grammarian.

Before the Revolution Urbain Domergue had already published a few textbooks on French,<sup>6</sup> and in particular had founded a journal devoted to the French language, the *Journal de la Langue Française*. The first series of the *Journal* appeared from 1784 to 1788 in Lyon. From January 1791 to March 1792, Urbain Domergue published the *Journal de Langue Française* in Paris. It was there that he also founded in October 1791 the "Société des Amateurs de la Langue Française" and continued to publish grammars<sup>7</sup> and received responsible tasks from the "Comité d'instruction publique de la Convention Nationale." Urbain Domergue was a member of the institution succeeding the "Académie Française," the "Institut National des Sciences et Arts," which was founded in 1795, and he taught "grammaire générale" within the framework of the educational goals of the Revolution. He tirelessly campaigned for the propagation of his grammatical doctrine and in 1807, three years before his death, he even founded an "Académie grammaticale."

Urbain Domergue has unjustly been called a purist who opposed neologisms. As early as in the first series of the *Journal de la Langue Française* he accepted an article with the programmatic title “De la nécessité de créer des mots nouveaux” (“On the necessity of creating new words”).<sup>8</sup> He placed the pages of his *Journal* in 1791–2 at the disposal of those carrying out the neology dispute, and the most active participant in questions concerning neology, J.-E.-F. Boinvilliers, bestowed upon Domergue the honorary title of “grammairien-patriote.”<sup>9</sup>

Urbain Domergue also never hesitated to express his own opinion in unambiguous terms about purists and about blind fanaticism in linguistic innovation. He adopted the distinction made in 1762 in the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française* between “néologie” and “néologisme.” “Néologie” corresponds to the rational use of freedom in new linguistic creations. “Néologisme” is, however, a debased linguistic phenomenon that results from a misuse of linguistic freedom.<sup>10</sup>

Even before the Revolution Urbain Domergue had linked the demand for sensible new linguistic creations with the rejection of an elitist conception of language and proclaimed the right of everyone to collaborate in the necessary enrichment of language. Here he used a formulation that very consciously alluded to the opposite demand made by Vaugelas:

It is permitted for the person who would to coin new words, to give new meanings to old words while conforming to the rules of neology so that there is no confusion with the neologism. Neology is to idioms what morality is to manners; it is their foundation and it rules them. Neologism is to writing what vice is to the heart, it defiles it.<sup>11</sup>

In a text that was published during the Revolution, Domergue even called purism the “superstition of grammar,” whose advocates one should at best call “grammatistes” because they do not deserve to be called “grammairiens”:

[L]et us not violate the name of grammarian in prostituting it to the “grammatistes,” who, never elevating themselves to the principles on which science rests, and constrained by routine, came to stutter some infantile rules on the composition of words...neither let us give it to the purist. The purist has no feeling for science; he is numb to real beauty, and full of zeal for conspicuous faults. Purism is the superstition of grammar; purism is the secret enemy of purity.<sup>12</sup>

Urbain Domergue resuscitated the publication of the *Journal de la Langue Française* with the revolutionary zeal of a newly named “grammairien-patriote,” for he intended the *Journal* to reveal the “treasures of neology” for the enrichment of the language spoken by the first free people on earth. Domergue nevertheless practiced restraint compared to other linguistic

innovators (he called out for a “wise neology” [“sage néologie”]), yet the *Journal* opened its columns to particularly bold neologistic proposals. At the same time, articles that discussed abolishing the use of formal forms of address and of servile expressions of politeness indicate the attempt to put revolutionary ideas into linguistic practice.<sup>13</sup>

In October 1791 Domergue founded the “Société des Amateurs de la Langue Française,” whose name soon acquired the democratic addition “Société *délibérante*.” Even Robespierre, Condorcet, Brissot, and Louis-Sébastien Mercier were registered in the list of its members.<sup>14</sup> The main goal of the “Société” was to provide the nation with a true dictionary of its language, a task that, according to Domergue, the “Académie Française” had utterly failed to complete.

On 5 October 1791, in an address filled with revolutionary enthusiasm, Urbain Domergue turned to the charter meeting of the “Société des Amateurs de la Langue Française” in order to sketch out the ambitious program of a dictionary that, as a “national monument,” was to give the “first free people” a language that was worthy of its new political existence. One finds reminiscences of Condillac’s theory in such statements as when he says that without a “langue bien faite” there can be no “idées saines” and without “idées saines” humanity can enjoy no happiness. The “abuse of words misleads us about things” and this abuse is thus the most serious error of humanity; it can now, thanks to the Revolution, be overcome for all eternity. France will give the example of the “régénération des langues” to all peoples. But for the present, the address states, a great number of committees must take up the work on this “dictionnaire vraiment philosophique,” such as the “comité d’étymologie,” a “comité de syntaxe” and, naturally, a “comité de néologie.” In addition to grammatical and patriotic zeal, this address at the charter meeting of the “Société des Amateurs de la Langue Française” also reveals a fundamental optimism. I will cite the most important part of this text as an authentic document of the language debate that rearticulated the linguistic issues of the Enlightenment during the years of the Revolution:<sup>15</sup>

Gentlemen,

A truly philosophical dictionary that embraces our common tongue in all of its particulars is lacking in our literature, in our daily needs, in our new political existence. Vainly the nation flattered itself for more than a century of seeing the French Academy raise the great monument for which it was founded; always mistaken in its righteous hope, it saw itself reduced to surrender to academic heresies, like the vulgar embrace of false religions, because the genuine one was not revealed to its eyes. The day of liberty belongs to it; all errors will vanish, like the shadows disappearing before the star that lights our way. But of the various errors that generate the unhappiness of man, the most fatal perhaps is the abuse of words, which deceives us about *things*. Persuaded that without a well-

crafted language there are no sound ideas and that without sound ideas there is no happiness, I have conceived the idea of gathering you together to work in concert at perfecting our idiom.

France received from America the example of the regeneration of laws; let us give to all nations the example of the regeneration of languages.

To establish properly the national monument that we wish to erect, we must first and foremost secure its foundations. Lexicology, which is the science of dictionaries, will instruct us. It imperiously dictates that a truly philosophic dictionary presents, for each word, a correct classification, a sound etymology, an exact prosody, a clear etymology, a logical definition, examples appropriate to different meanings; that it opens the treasury of a wise neology, that it discloses the secrets of dialectic, of poetry, of eloquence; in a word, that it leaves nothing to be desired in all that could contribute to the perfection of the language, to the instruction and pleasure of the reader.

But as it is important to leave nothing behind, as success depends on the care one will take to scrutinize with a philosophical eye all the particulars, in order to compose a [work] worthy of the lights of our age, I believe that it is necessary to form first a lexical committee, from which, as from a fruitful tree-trunk, all other committees will spring.

The lexical committee will be composed of an indefinite number of members. All of those who believe they can shed some light on this fundamental part of the edifice are invited to put themselves forward. A vain modesty should in no way stop lovers of the French tongue. The desire to be useful is the sole consideration that ought to determine them.

The lexical committee will present its work at the next assembly; each article will be discussed, and finally decided, by a majority of voices. From this moment, we will know how many committees are necessary to arrange and prepare the work.

If I may be permitted to anticipate the plan to which you will submit, I believe that there will be seven committees:

The committee of etymology,  
The committee of pronunciation and of orthography,  
That of definition, of meaning, and of examples,  
That of syntax,  
The committee of logic and of “belles-lettres,”  
The committee of neology,  
The committee of revision....<sup>16</sup>

There follow detailed suggestions concerning procedure and the regularity with which the entire assembly, as well as the “comité de lexique” and its subcommittees, should meet. Condorcet, Louis-Sébastien Mercier, and Sicard were declared members of the “comité de lexique” following the charter meeting.<sup>17</sup> Sicard, who proposed reforms in the education of deaf mutes, was interested in sensualistic language philosophy and wrote several pertinent

works on the subject. In the proceedings of the “Société des Amateurs de la Langue Française” he represented views that were to become characteristic of the Ideologues’ movement.

The minutes of the meetings of the “Société des Amateurs de la Langue Française” were continuously printed in the *Journal de la Langue Française* and count among its most interesting aspects. They clearly show that the future Ideologues—whose basic positions were already defined even if the name of their movement had not yet been created—attempted, particularly through Sicard’s appearance, to take control of the orientation of the society’s work. The minutes similarly create the impression that Urbain Domergue had some difficulty weathering the initially rather stormy debates.<sup>18</sup>

The daily meetings, which were originally planned so that each committee could meet on separate days of the week (Sunday was reserved for neology) were soon reduced to three weekly meetings and then finally to one per week. Two days after the founding of the “Société” the secretary of the “comité de lexique” emphasized the responsibility of their work with regard to the Enlightenment with the observation that the new, bolder, and richer language that would of necessity arise from the Revolution would be worthy of the eighteenth century.<sup>19</sup> One of the first letters from a subscriber to the *Journal de la Langue Française* after the founding of the “Société” of the same name referred to the founding of a “comité de lexique” and addressed the problem of the “abus des mots.” The writer stated that the term one typically used for an “émigrant” was an inappropriate word for the “princes” and “officers” who had left France and were now inciting other countries to war against the country of Revolution. This reprehensible and even criminal behavior would have to be characterized by words such as “déserteur” or “transfuge” instead of “émigrant.”<sup>20</sup>

After the optimism of the speech held during the charter meeting, the establishment of an ambitious program, the formation of committees and subcommittees, the “Société des Amateurs de la Langue Française” and its *Journal* had a short-lived existence. The minutes of the meetings of the “Société”, at first quite comprehensive and substantial, with reports on lively discussions about points on the agenda, soon became shorter and shorter. And in the meeting of 12 March 1792, hardly four months after its founding, the main item on the agenda of the “Société” was the discussion of a question posed by a correspondent from the provinces: “Is one supposed to say: this soup tastes good or tastes well?” (“Faut-il dire: cette soupe a l’air bonne ou l’air bon?”).<sup>21</sup>

In the issue of 24 March 1792, Urbain Domergue then informed the subscribers to the *Journal de la Langue Française* that he saw himself forced to cease publication since the printing costs were not being covered by the sales. But he added that the continuing work of the language society he founded would be unaffected by this action: “the ‘Société des Amateurs de la Langue Française’ will continue to hold regular meetings at the house of Urbain Domergue, rue Saint-Thomas-du Louvre, hôtel d’Orléans.”<sup>22</sup>

Contributing to the decline of interest in Domergue's language society and its journal was, as Domergue himself said, the dramatic course of contemporary political events. At the beginning of 1792, Robespierre, Condorcet and many others had more pressing problems to contend with than the meetings and discussions of the "Société des Amateurs de la Langue Française."

But Urbain Domergue was not to be discouraged. At the beginning of 1794, he proposed to the "Comité de salut public" a plan for writing a report on the French language that he intended for the communes and the "Sociétés populaires" of the Republic. The text begins with an extensive enumeration of the reasons that make a deeper understanding of the "langue nationale," and a personal dedication to its dissemination, a revolutionary duty of each "citoyen." These reasons extend from the perception of the guaranteed rights of the "citoyen" to the observation that the counter-Revolution repeatedly makes strategic use of the lack of a national linguistic unity. Linguistic unity would thus have to complete the territorial and political unity of the Republic. "The Republic, unified and indivisible with respect to its territory and its political system, ought to be unified and indivisible with respect to its language."<sup>23</sup>

Domergue suggested as one of the simplest and most effective means of achieving this goal the periodic publication of his course of instruction for the French language, which ought to contain the following elements:

- 1 "An elementary and simplified French grammar" ("La grammaire française élémentaire, simplifiée"), a work that Urbain Domergue felt himself to be both called on and obligated to write.<sup>24</sup>
- 2 "A vocabulary of normal words and of those to which the Revolution gave birth" ("Un vocabulaire des mots usuels et de ceux qu'a enfantés la Révolution") with precise explanations of the use of words, which should especially include the "true meaning" of words.
- 3 "La Grammaire raisonnée" as a philosophical deepening of the "grammaire élémentaire."
- 4 The "solution" of various difficult questions relating to the use of language.
- 5 A grammatical commentary on the work of a famous author.
- 6 A collection of selected texts on eloquence and poetry with a commentary.

With these requirements, Domergue essentially repeated the thematic program that he had declared to be his aim as editor of the *Journal de la Langue Française*. Yet now, after the execution of the king and the declaration of the Republic had taken place, the political elements of Domergue's report on the French language have become decidedly more radical. This is most clearly shown in his demand for a new revision of vocabulary. He felt that only in this way was it possible to eradicate the

“errors” that had been accumulated in the dictionaries before the Revolution and prevented the people from perceiving the truth. Urbain Domergue radicalized—and, to be sure, also simplified—ideas that originated in the Enlightenment debate about the “abus des mots” when he saw the hour approaching when one could finally give words their “true meaning”:

Knowledge of the true meaning of words gives rectitude to the spirit, and prevents all the errors that are born of language.

Logical errors, grammatical errors, political errors, peril on every page, with each word, such are all our lexicons from the pocket Richelet to the great dictionary of the forty immortals whose happy death delivered the language from the chains in which she languished enslaved, impoverished, without honor, and without courage. Let us make a republican dictionary, acknowledged by reason, by taste, by political health, in which each word, in depicting a correct idea, would no longer assault the French eye as it read these academic definitions: the king is the sovereign, the citizen is the inhabitant of a town; marquis, baron, count, duke, prince, are terms of rank. A king is a usurper, a tyrant, an oppressor of public liberty. A citizen is a member of the city, of the sovereign. Marquis, baron, count, duke, prince, are expressions formerly invented by pride, adopted by baseness, now obliterated by the level of equality and relegated to the stage to become objects of derision or of horror.<sup>25</sup>

Domergue concluded his report with the assurance that he was able to contribute to a deeper understanding and to the propagation of the French language, which he apostrophized as that “electric conductor of freedom, of equality and of reason,” and hence to the political rebirth of Europe: “par la propagation de notre langue, le conducteur électrique de la liberté, de l’égalité, de la raison, contribuer à la régénération politique de l’Europe.”<sup>26</sup>

In 1795, Domergue turned to the “Comité d’instruction publique” that was under the auspices of the Convention with the suggestion that the publication of the *Journal de la Langue Française* be resumed after he had requested the appropriation of rooms for the re-establishment of the “Société des Amateurs de la Langue Française.”<sup>27</sup>

During these years, one of Urbain Domergue’s most persistent opponents was Morellet, whose conservative position with regard to the topic of the “abus des mots” we have already seen. Morellet criticized the dictionary project that Domergue had proposed by saying that it would amount to a distortion of the French language. And, in an article with the ironic title, “Leçons de grammaire à un grammairien,” Morellet even threw doubt on Domergue’s competence as a grammarian.<sup>28</sup> We have already seen that Urbain Domergue modernized the Enlightenment’s sensualistic theory of word order by combining it with experiences taken from the Revolution and placing it in relation to the newly acquired political freedom.

When, in 1807, he again founded a language society, the “Académie grammaticale,” he made its style of leadership conform to the Napoleonic era that had descended in the meantime and the linguistic problems he then placed on the agenda no longer exhibit their erstwhile revolutionary enthusiasm.<sup>29</sup>

### **LOUIS-SÉBASTIEN MERCIER AND HIS “NÉOLOGIE”: A DEFENSE OF THE REPUBLIC**

Louis-Sébastien Mercier had already acquired a widely recognized name during the years of the Revolution. It was above all his *Tableau de Paris* (1782–8), a twelve-volume journalistic and literary depiction of problems and episodes in contemporary Parisian life, which was followed by a description of post-revolutionary Paris, that had made him famous.

In 1801, Mercier’s twelve-volume work appeared, *Néologie, ou Vocabulaire de mots nouveaux, à renouveler ou pris dans des acceptions nouvelles*.<sup>30</sup> By thus both retaining and displaying his republican sentiments, Mercier soon thereafter aroused the displeasure of Napoleon; Mercier’s notorious lack of respect for established authorities also did not help matters. Mercier’s temperament also comes to the fore in his *Néologie* and gives a very personal tone to the commitment that during the eighteenth century characterized neology dictionaries and all other statements about the problem of linguistic innovation.

Before the publication of his *Néologie*, Mercier had worked for close to ten years on putting together a comprehensive lexical index of words which he wanted to suggest be assimilated or reintroduced to French. At issue were, in some instances, new meanings for words that were already familiar. While considering a broad range of works from the eighteenth century, Mercier’s examples range from Amyot and Montaigne to texts from the revolutionary years. He also complemented these by adding a large number of his own suggestions for innovations.<sup>31</sup>

Only approximately one third of the words contained in this index found their way in 1801 into the two-volume *Néologie*. Mercier afterwards began a comprehensive work under the title *Mon Dictionnaire*, the publication of which, however, was forbidden before he even completed the letter “A.”<sup>32</sup>

Even Mercier’s famous eyewitness accounts of the events of Parisian society, whose critical orientation later caused him to label himself “le véritable prophète de la révolution,” indicate an increasingly lexicographical emphasis that went in the direction of commentary on linguistic novelties or new uses of old words. With its numerous and often quite short “chapters,” these works even physically resemble a dictionary.<sup>33</sup>

*Le Nouveau Paris*, which appeared three years before the *Néologie*, has several chapters that, despite their immediate reference to the Revolution, are actually lexicographical articles that are in some cases no longer than a couple of lines in which new words or word usages are commented upon.<sup>34</sup>

On the other hand, Mercier's lexicographical index as well as the *Néologie* contain articles that are more comprehensive than many of the chapters in the *Nouveau Parish*.<sup>35</sup> The words one finds there already indicate that Mercier stated his position on the agents, ideas, and events of the Revolution and of the following years in lexicographical form, and that in this new political situation he thus demonstrated a commitment that had already characterized the lexicography of the Enlightenment and that was most particularly characteristic of neology.

At first, Mercier had enthusiastically welcomed the Revolution; in 1789 he founded the *Annales patriotiques et littéraires* and he was a member of the Convention. But in October 1793 he was arrested and was not released until Robespierre's fall. His later attitude is marked by the contradiction between his faulty understanding of the Jacobin dictatorship and his shock over the burgeoning counter-Revolution, the seizure of power by the bourgeoisie and finally Napoleon's strangulation of the Republic. This contradictory attitude manifests itself in the *Nouveau Paris* in the commentary on words such as "Sanguinocrate," "Huaille" (= "populace hurlante") on the one hand, and "Contre-Révolution," "Capitaliste," "haute bourgeoisie qui remplace la haute noblesse" on the other.<sup>36</sup>

The two octavo volumes of the *Néologie, ou Vocabulaire de mots nouveaux, à renouveler ou pris dans des acceptions nouvelles* have over seven hundred pages altogether, including a very detailed introduction. In addition to the individual entries, which usually lack a traditional definition, an example of the usage is cited together with some commentary. The most often quoted authors are, in order of decreasing frequency, Voltaire, Rousseau, Rétif de la Bretonne, Montaigne, Mirabeau, Corneille (often in quotations from Voltaire), Linguet, Diderot, and Montesquieu.<sup>37</sup> Mercier himself provided the greatest number of example texts overall, for he claimed to be the author of all the articles that are listed without any attribution.

The foreword combines Mercier's profession of allegiance to neology with an expression of his political and philosophical leanings, from which one can discern that he was unaware of the philosophical sources of his own views concerning the problems of neology. He felt that true dictionaries could be written only by a few individuals who were conscious of language and who expressed their thoughts and feelings without paying attention to linguistic prejudices. Mercier thought that the Academy had buried the previous riches of the French language and had stolen its expressive power. Mercier thus proclaimed as his stylistic ideal a poetic prose that was liberated from the confines of traditional grammar, so that a treatise on the new freedoms of French word order could be the crowning achievement of *Néologie*. The powerful "langue républicaine," the expression of striving for linguistic freedom and progress, is opposed to the colourless "langue monarchique." Following a diatribe against Locke, Condillac, and the Ideologues, who were likewise suspected of materialism and of attempting to make sensualism a

kind of scientific doctrine of the Republic, Mercier made his profession of faith in Descartes's doctrine of innate ideas.<sup>38</sup>

Mercier overlooked the fact that the principles of his theory of style, as well as of neology, had been formulated during the eighteenth century by sensualistic philosophers in the debate about language theory. Mercier's self-conscious escapades into philosophical territory made it easy for his opponents to label him as a woolly-headed eccentric. In 1806, for example, he published a comprehensive "refutation" of Copernicus and Newton, and the first article of the *Néologie* was supposed to provide the first blow of the attack: "A+B. Science et génie du docte Newton." A large number of additional entries attack Newton, Locke, Condillac, the Ideologues and especially the "Académie Française." Thus, following the term "Bornage," which was a legal concept of land measurement, we read the following commentary: "Some pedantic academicians wanted to mark the boundaries of the French language" ("Des plats académiciens ont voulu opérer le Bornage de la langue française"). Mercier's talent for formulating his personal judgments as commentaries on any number of words becomes evident as well with regard to the Revolution.

It may come as a surprise that in the introduction to the *Néologie* Mercier communicated his intention to consider the vocabulary of the Revolution only in a few exceptional instances. Indeed, of the 367 entries which the "Supplément, contenant les mots nouveaux en usage depuis la révolution" to the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie* of 1798 contains, Mercier's *Néologie* only lists 16.<sup>39</sup>

Yet Mercier considered quite a number of other words that are intimately associated with events or ideas of the Revolution, and, in addition, he included other entries whose textual examples, by considering political and social problems, also touch on the Revolution and its consequences.<sup>40</sup> Mercier was particularly proud of his own creations, such as "le Décaput" as a more dignified word for the guillotine, "Encachoté" and "Juilletiser": "When those peoples, still slaves, will overthrow their Bastilles, as did the French in '89, will not one be able to say that they have finally 'Juilletisé'?" ("Lorsque les peuples, encore esclaves, renverseront leurs Bastilles, à l'exemple des Français de 89, ne pourra-t-on pas dire qu'ils ont enfin Juilletisé?"). The word "Juilletisé" was thus formed after the example of "Septembriser," which referred to the events of September 1792.

Still more numerous are other entries that are not specifically connected with the Revolution, but whose commentary reveals Mercier's opinion so that we can see their affinity to the same problem. Here I offer a few examples:

EPOQUE. The mania of the nobles had created this term: is it "Epoqué" properly?... The eighteenth century will march into the future "Epoqué" of the most extraordinary events.

FORCENER. Marat...and consorts, “forced” their style and took this raging insanity for energy or vigor...

GENERATEUR. Equality and liberty are...necessary principles and “generators” of all law and of the system of regular government.

LEONISER. [Revolutions give to opinions this fury that serves to “lionize” people most accustomed to the yoke...

TRONER. It is probable that, with time, no individual will “throne” in Europe...<sup>41</sup>

Over fifty other entries have similar and in some cases much more extensive explanations.

It is interesting that between the *Néologie* and the *Nouveau Paris*, which appeared three years before, a distinct shift in political orientation takes place. The description of society and of linguistic critique emphasizes above all the contradiction between the ideal and the reality of the Revolution, which, in Mercier’s moderate but nevertheless republican opinion, was disfigured first by the Jacobins and then by the opportunists who had achieved power. The course of the Revolution triggered a disappointment in Mercier that he described in generous detail and about which he finally consoled himself by believing that, despite all of the errors that had been made, the Revolution had opened the door to a better future for humanity.<sup>42</sup>

In the political and social orientation of the *Néologie*, however, disappointment about the Revolution diminished in favor of emphasizing its meaning for the future and stressing what Mercier considered its most important achievement, which he saw as being increasingly endangered: the Republic. In the *Néologie*, the moralist and critic of the Revolution became more than ever a defender of the Revolution and of republicanism. But he did so in a highly characteristic fashion: just three years before Napoleon’s coronation as Emperor.

Despite a few unavoidable personal reminiscences, criticism of the Jacobin rule thus also retreats into the background and the critique focuses on different forms of danger to the Republic: external enemies, waste, selfishness, subordination, and social contradictions all the way to the ambition of the Republic’s generals.

External enemies:

HORRIPILATION. The French Republic: one would hardly know how to pronounce these words in several foreign courts without “Horripilation” (“La République française: on ne saurait guère prononcer ces mots dans plusieurs cours étrangères, sans Horripilation”).

One finds similar entries for “Monarchiser; Opprobrer; Pologniser la France.”

Internal enemies:

LIBERTICIDE. “The word one gives to all means employed by the enemies of the Republic to destroy liberty, whether they use the pen, the

sword, or the crucifix” (“C’est le nom qu’on donne à tous les moyens qu’emploient les ennemis de la république, pour tuer la liberté, soit qu’ils se servent de la plume, du sabre ou du crucifix”).

This mention of the “saber” and “crucifix” as means of eradicating the Republic was especially relevant because, in the year in which the *Néologie* was published, Napoleon had used his concord with the Vatican to underscore his desire to co-operate with the church.

REPUBLICIDE. This noun, so often applicable, designates the assassin of a republic (“Ce substantif, si souvent applicable, désigne l’assassin d’une république”).

In the case of the entry for the word “principier” we are confronted by a term that opponents of the Republic tried to use to make its staunch supporters look ridiculous.

PRINCIPIER. The name one currently gives, derisively, to those who, since the establishment of the Republic, have never renounced republican principles that make themselves universal (“C’est le nom qu’on donne actuellement, par dérision, à ceux qui, depuis l’établissement de la république, n’ont jamais renoncé aux principes républicains qui s’universalisent”).

Mercier’s warning of the danger that arises from one’s own generals is undisguised in his creation of the word “sabre-clef”:

SABRE-CLEF, OU CLEF-SABRE. The scepter *par excellence*; unfailing master-key; it opens all locks, it then counterbalances all the rest.... This scepter has its worshippers, because it has a side that courts tender love (“Le sceptre par excellence; passe-partout immanquable; il va à toutes les serrures, il balance alors tout le reste.... Ce sceptre a ses adorateurs, parce qu’il a un côté qui se fait tendrement aimer”).

The commitment of the *Néologie* to the Republic and republican sentiment is complemented by additional entries in Mercier’s *Mon Dictionnaire*, although only the entries from “a” to “artialiser” were printed. Again, the “républicains” were urged to maintain vigilance (“Apâter”). Several new entries warn of the spirit of subjugation (“Acclamateur, Adulation, Agenouilloir, Anti-Adulateur, Anti-Despote, Antichambrier”). The immediate contemporary context of the eager accommodation to Napoleon’s growing desire for authority is clearest in the entry for “Agenouilloir”:

A piece of furniture that soon could become necessary in performing the morning exercises, and keeps one “genuflexible”...; it is good to be prepared beforehand (“C’est un meuble qui pourrait bientôt devenir nécessaire pour y faire ses premiers exercices, et se rendre genuflexible ...; il est bon de se préparer d’avance”).

The entry for “Absolutisme” contains the laconic commentary “This ‘ism’ makes me shudder” (“Cet isme-là me fait frissonner”). And probably no one overlooked a derisive allusion to the famed Napoleon in the commentary to Mercier’s neologism “Accidental”:

an accidental death, an accidental success, a battle won accidentally; you know something about that, generals of all countries (“une mort Accidentale, un succès Accidental, une bataille gagné Accidentalement; vous en savez quelque chose, généraux de tous les pays”).

The political commitment of Mercier’s *Néologie* strengthened his assurances that he had always been a “néologue” and, in this capacity, that he defended the rights of the nation against its enemies and oppressors.<sup>43</sup> It was thus entirely natural that in the *Néologie* Mercier bitterly attacked Desfontaines, the old arch-enemy of linguistic renewal, as well as Morellet and Laharpe as representatives of the linguistic counter-revolution. *Mon Dictionnaire* even mentions Bonald (in the entry for “Abbé”) as counting among the representatives of reaction although this was several years before he became the intellectual leader of the Restoration and also made a name for himself in the realm of language philosophy.

In the debate over neology, as well as in the controversies raging over the foundations of word order, the discussion centered on the problems of linguistic development and variety of expression. Mercier demonstrated this connection in the foreword to his *Néologie* with the promise to present as the crowning achievement of his literary life a *Traité sur les inversions*, as a treatise on the flexibility of French word order. Mercier’s goal was the creation of an emotional prose that had liberated itself from the shackles of every rigid standard of word order. It was not enough that the “inversions” that had long been allowed in poetics seemed completely inadequate to him; versification itself was rejected as an impediment to the free development of word order. Mercier thus came to the same logical conclusion that had been reached by Fénelon and which Ramsay had expressed in the debate about the lyric poetry of *Télémaque*. As an example of the free prose style one should strive to emulate, Mercier named Chateaubriand’s *Atala* of 1801. Works such as those of Diderot and Rousseau had already helped emotional prose become part of literary practice and reality, which made one forget that its original theoretical justification came from sensualism. Mercier was therefore able to reject Condillac’s philosophy and still proclaim a stylistic ideal that upheld the tenets of sensualism:

Prose is ours; its progress is free; it only belongs to us to impress it with a more lively character. The prose-writers are our true poets; may they dare, and the language will take on entirely new accents; cannot words, even syllables, take their place so that their concurrence produces the

most unforeseen effect? Our constructions are not as rigid as they would have us believe; I will prove it in the Treatise which I am announcing.<sup>44</sup>

When Mercier wanted to use word order to help create a large number of possibilities of nuanced expression, he thus appropriated the stylistic requirement that had been theoretically established in the sensualistic debate about the principles of the “ordre naturel.” We even find the remark that emotional subtlety did not stand in any contradiction to clarity of expression. The advocate of a lexical and grammatical renewal of language was still unable to forget the old enemy Desfontaines, who had died in 1745.

When I will have published the *Treatise on Inversions*, I will have paid my last tribute to literature;... I will have indicated a new idiom analogous to our genius; because I will always be intelligible; I will touch neither the clarity of the language, nor its harmony; I will enlarge it only from a mass of forms that will introduce infinitely differentiated nuances, ...Language is for him who knows how to make it obey his ideas. Leave language in the hands of our detractors, and it will become a booby like them... What remains of all of the scholasticism of the Abbé Desfontaines in relation to that of today? It is “Sorbonnesque” language, nothing more.<sup>45</sup>

The *Traité sur les inversions*, which Mercier announced in his *Néologie*, was never published, and perhaps it was never completed. Yet the lines of development in the debate on French word order continued in the direction of encouraging emotional prose, which had been demanded by Condillac, Diderot, and Batteux.<sup>46</sup>

In its well-aimed political attacks, Mercier’s *Néologie* was just as much a conscious expression of his republicanism as was his general demand for linguistic development and enrichment, for casting off the shackles that had been laid on the language by the “despotic reign of what was called the French Academy” (“règne despotique de ce qu’on appelait l’Académie française”). This demand became politically more precise when reference was made to Rivarol’s statement that the hierarchy of style in French corresponded to the hierarchy of subjects in the monarchy; this statement was the “confession of a royalist,”<sup>47</sup> who had emigrated as a notorious opponent of the Republic.

Victor Hugo took up several ideas from Mercier’s *Néologie* and expanded them in a political and literary manifesto in which he summarized the conception of language in his own literary practice. Like Mercier, Hugo thought that the republicanism of the Revolution symbolized the overcoming of political and thus also of linguistic conservatism that stretched from

Vaugelas to Beauzée:  
Poetry was the monarchy...  
Language was the State before eighty-nine;

Words, well or low-born, lived penned in classes;...  
 And I was not unaware that the incensed hand  
 That delivers the word, delivers thought...  
 That, if Beauzée is god, it is true, I am an atheist...  
 I have said to words: Be [a] Republic! Be  
 The huge ant-hill, and work! Believe,  
 Love, live!...<sup>48</sup>

In addition to Vaugelas, Bouhours, Restaut, Beauzée, Du Marsais, and Batteux, Victor Hugo named in this text a considerable number of representative thinkers who took part in the language debates of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Vaugelas, Beauzée and the “Académie Française” are cited with particular emphasis as the pillars of linguistic conservatism. When Hugo equated the liberation of the word with the liberation of thought the primary concern of the Enlightenment was thus once again restated as that of recognizing the development of language as the condition for the progress of thought itself.

### **THE IDEOLOGUES: CONTINUATION AND RETRACTION OF THE SENSUALIST THEORY OF LANGUAGE**

In the years following the Revolution, the Ideologues<sup>49</sup> represented the true theoretical continuation of the Enlightenment. Destutt de Tracy had intended for the word “Ideology,” from which the name “Ideologues” was later derived, to designate the “science of ideas” for which, in the eighteenth century, the term “psychology” had been suggested. He thus wanted to avoid any association with antiquated metaphysical notions that were connected with this latter term by using the word “Ideology.” In the Ideologues’ conception of science, signs, and in particular that of language, took on a very important role. One of their representatives sketched out the central importance of the theory of signs and language for the Ideologues by saying:

One must admit that the essence of the human ability—that is, reason and spirit—to raise ourselves above everything else that lives and moves on the globe consists alone in the art of the use of signs (“Il faudra avouer que l’homme tout entier, c’est-à-dire la raison et le génie, qui élèvent audessus de tout ce qui a vie et mouvement sur ce globe, consistent uniquement dans l’art des signes.”)<sup>50</sup>

Although the Ideologues can in no way be seen as having simply continued in Condillac’s footsteps, Condillac’s sensualist doctrine was nonetheless their common point of departure. The group that was later given the name of “Idéologues” was composed of philosophers, psychologists, jurists, and pedagogues as well as representatives of other branches of the “science de l’homme,” or of the comprehensive science of humanity, and began to take

shape from personal contact with Condillac and other important Enlightenment thinkers. Future leaders of the Ideologue movement such as Destutt de Tracy and Cabanis had learned about Enlightenment sensualism in Madame Helvétius's salon, among whose guests belonged Condillac, d'Alembert, Turgot and Condorcet. The Ideologues also received the name "Société d'Auteuil" after the residence of Madame Helvétius in Auteuil; when they demonstrated an oppositional attitude after Napoleon's ascension to power, a new name was coined for them, "les boudeurs d'Auteuil," or "The Grouches of Auteuil." In the "Société d'Auteuil" the concerns of the *Encyclopédie* were continued and the foundation was laid for general education in various disciplines. These political and ethical interests of the "Société d'Auteuil" were particularly indebted to Helvétius,<sup>51</sup> whose demands for political and social reforms, which rested on an exact knowledge of human beings and their existential needs, were later appropriated by many Ideologues.

In addition to Destutt de Tracy and Cabanis, the most well-known Ideologues included Sieyès, Laplace, Garat, Sicard, François Thurot, Volney, and Dégérando. On the whole, they were associated from the beginning with the events of the Revolution—Sieyès, for instance, is the author of the programmatic treatise "Qu'est-ce que le Tiers Etat?" (1789)—but they then stood on the side of the "Girondins," the right wing of the National Convention. Although Garat, as Robespierre's Minister of Justice, later read the death sentence to the fallen king, the majority of the Ideologues survived the revolutionary dictatorship of the Jacobins by remaining in hiding or by being held in prison.

The actual period during which the Ideologues were prominent only began after the fall of Robespierre. Although they did not make any demands for an unbroken continuation of the Revolution after the model of the Jacobins, they did support measures for protecting the republic against monarchical tendencies and they strove through the parliament and educational system to renew France after the image of the liberal bourgeoisie.

Under the Directory the Ideologues created favorable institutional conditions for their development as the leading philosophical and linguistic movement in France. They secured influential positions in the "Institut National des Sciences et Arts," which was founded in 1795 as the body to succeed the Académie Française, and they made sure, for example, that this institute received a "Section de l'analyse des sensations et des idées."

When, in 1795, a law was passed concerning the organization of public education and general grammar was made a required element of the educational program in the newly created "Ecoles centrales," the demand for a scientific consideration of language, which was supposed to serve simultaneously as training in analytic thinking, seemed to be on the verge of realization. The Enlightenment conviction concerning the important role language plays in the development of cognition, the necessity of the "citoyen's" conscious and effective use of language and the importance derived from this recognition of a deeper knowledge of one's native language, but also

of foreign languages, led to the adoption of an impressive amount of linguistic instruction in the official educational program. In elaborating his *Eléments d'Idéologie* of 1801–4, which was one of the most representative works of the Ideologues, Destutt de Tracy mainly had the “Ecoles centrales” in mind. The theory of signs and language occupies a prominent place in his work, and the second volume even bears the title “Grammaire.”

In Destutt de Tracy’s work, Condillac’s theory of language experienced its most immediate continuation. Like Condillac, Destutt de Tracy saw in the “sensations” the single source of human knowledge. He derived the four fundamental intellectual faculties, “sensibilité,” “mémoire,” “jugement” and “volonté” from sense perceptions and their transformation, in which language is given a crucial role. Destutt de Tracy naturally placed great hopes on the physiological investigations of Cabanis, for he expected them to provide a confirmation of his theory.

In answering the question of whether thinking presupposes the presence of signs, Destutt de Tracy began with a nuanced notion of the concept of “thinking” and, working from sensualistic premises, he arrived at a more precise definition of the role of language in the cognitive process.<sup>52</sup> In a fashion reminiscent of Condillac, he distinguished between a kind of pre-linguistic thinking, on the basis of which phonetic language gradually evolves from the “langage d’action,”<sup>53</sup> and a kind of thinking that already presupposes linguistic signs. Referring to the phylogenetic development of the relationship between language and thought, Destutt de Tracy distinguished two phases that are characterized by the dominant role of one of the two aspects:

[L]anguage first fulfills the requirements of thought, then it causes new requirements to arise by supporting its activity, so that, in an alternating fashion, the idea brings about the sign and the sign generates the idea (“le langage satisfait d’abord les besoins de la pensée, puis lui en fait contracter de nouveaux en favorisant son action, et qu’alternativement l’idée fait naître le signe, et le signe fait naître l’idée.”)<sup>54</sup>

Like Condillac, Destutt de Tracy also assumed that the cultural development of a people depends on a constant interplay between language and thought, which eventually leads to the perfection of both.

For Destutt de Tracy the most important task of linguistic signs, from which all functions of language can be derived, is the preparation of ideas for the sensate faculty of perception. Every idea that is to be communicated to others has to find entrance into thought by way of the senses and thus needs a form that can be perceived by the senses.<sup>55</sup> The objectification of ideas is not, however, the precondition for communication alone, but also for the operation of cognitive processes themselves. If an idea is not combined with a material sign, then it is lost for any future thought. Destutt de Tracy even took this notion so far as to assign in some cases a greater value to the cognitive, rather than the communicative, function of language.<sup>56</sup> He

attributed a constitutive role to language in intellectual operations such as judging and the recognition of relationships.

As becomes clear in the fundamental determination of the relationship between language and thought and in the evaluation of the role individual linguistic categories play in the cognitive process, de Tracy largely followed Condillac's doctrine. In his first *Mémoires*,<sup>57</sup> he had already supported a sensualist epistemology that made no mention of recognizing the primacy of matter. This was no doubt a result of Destutt de Tracy's caution with regard to the debate that had recently become heated again about the materialistic consequences of sensualism.

If, in his *Elémens d'idéologie*, Destutt de Tracy basically adopted Condillac's epistemology and theory of language, then it does not necessarily follow that one can generalize the relationship of the Ideologues to their mentor on this basis alone. During the completely new historical situation following the French Revolution, Enlightenment sensualism went through numerous metamorphoses in the hands of individual Ideologues. The Ideologues themselves were even then aware of the variety and contradictions within their movement.<sup>58</sup> Their philosophical and, finally, their political differences grew so large that Napoleon denounced some of them as traitorous rebels and yet others as men in whom one could place hopes for the renewal of philosophy.

The increased emphasis on empirical observation was characteristic of the practice of a considerable number of the Ideologues and signals both their difference from the eighteenth century as well as their relation to nineteenth-century positivism. An accumulation of facts arose from the application of new methods in geography and anthropology, the genesis of a "science de l'homme" and the increase in the importance and prestige of experimentation in the natural sciences. That one must observe and evaluate "faits positifs" became a slogan in the sciences. Condorcet and his adherents had even introduced statistics and the theory of probability into politics and sociology as methods of finding truth and organizing facts and they founded the so-called "mathématique morale" as well as the "arithmétique politique."<sup>59</sup> The "esprit positif" made itself felt in the analysis of language as well, which occupied a key position within Ideology as a science of ideas, which was understood to be exact in the same sense as the natural sciences.<sup>60</sup> The title of a work that appeared in 1806 nicely illustrates this conception of a linguistic science:

Letter on the Possibility of creating a Science from Grammar whose Principles would be as certain and whose Demonstrations would be as strict as those of the physical and mathematical sciences ("Lettre sur la possibilité de faire de la Grammaire un ART-SCIENCE, aussi certain, dans ses principes, et aussi rigoureux dans ses démonstrations, que les ARTS-SCIENCES PHYSICO-MATHEMATIQUES").<sup>61</sup>

The distinction between "langue" and "langage" was, to be sure, no longer

new, yet the increased need for a differentiation of individual languages expressed itself in a heightened emphasis of “langue” at the expense of “language.” In this new context, numerous Ideologues doubted the validity of the assumption that linguistic universals exist. Thus the naming of newly created academic chairs as “chaire de grammaire générale” was criticized because there were no grammatical categories that were really common to all languages.<sup>62</sup> Nevertheless, in investigations containing comprehensive linguistic material, authors still referred to universals in the development of languages, the functions of kinds of words and the connection of words within sentences.<sup>63</sup>

A further result of the Ideologues’ “esprit positif was Thiébauld’s distinction between the “caractère d’une langue” and the “génie d’une langue,” that rested on the strict separation of observable data and abstractions. By the “caractère d’une langue” Thiébauld understood the observable peculiarities of a language that one can positively demonstrate, whereas he defined “le génie d’une langue” as the “spirit of this language, the general and immediate effect of its principles and thus the source and both the general and immediate cause of its procedures and rules.”<sup>64</sup> His conception of the “génie d’une langue” as a universal inner principle which one may use to explain the structure and mechanism of an individual language had been anticipated by the linguistic debates of the Enlightenment, but in the case of Thiébauld it received an independent importance through his separation of the externally apparent and non-apparent particularities of a language. In his *Traité du style*, Thiébauld already ascribed productive qualities to language, characteristics that are “dynamic” in the broadest sense of the term,<sup>65</sup> in a way that demonstrate an affinity to Humboldt’s notion of “inner linguistic form.” Thiébauld, who was soon forgotten and who, in the case of the “génie d’une langue,” was obviously working with impulses he received from Enlightenment debates about language, nevertheless represents one of the most contradictory personalities in the circle of Ideologues. Although he taught at several “Ecoles centrales,” and became a member of the Berlin Academy, and also belonged to the “Société libre des Sciences, Lettres et Arts,” he faced many opponents to his induction into the “Institut National.” The young Wilhelm von Humboldt was present at the debate surrounding Thiébauld’s membership of the “Institut.” If, as it seemed to Humboldt during his visit,<sup>66</sup> the majority of the members of the “Institut National” was not especially inclined toward Thiébauld, then this was certainly not due to his remarks on the “génie d’une langue.” Rather, Thiébauld had adopted an eclectic procedure that was apparently shocking even for the Ideologues. In his arguments concerning the role that the linearity of language plays in the analysis of the simultaneous cognitive act he followed Condillac,<sup>67</sup> but in explaining word order he unhesitatingly used some arguments borrowed from the rationalistic theory of the “ordre naturel” and which he seemed to have thought would give new validity and currency to this theory.<sup>68</sup>

Thiébauld was not alone among the Ideologues with his contradictory jumble of sensualist and rationalistic arguments about language philosophy. Even Thurot, who, like Destutt de Tracy, generally remained loyal to Enlightenment sensualism, defended an eclectic procedure, claiming that it made sense to choose ideas from various theories that were appropriate for a particular purpose.<sup>69</sup> Such a procedure could be particularly applied where practical interests determined the ends to which it was used, as in textbooks.<sup>70</sup> Requirements relating to educational politics also led scholars to the Ideologues who from the beginning were not completely in accord with sensualism. Roche-Ambrose Sicard is even described in a modern study as “the best example of an ideologist who was hostile to the Ideologues” (“le meilleur exemple d’idéologue hostile aux idéologues”).<sup>71</sup> A member of the “Institut National” since 1795, he had also previously collaborated with Domergue in the “Société des Amateurs de la Langue Française.” Humboldt called Sicard’s *Elémens de grammaire* “the work of a genius,”<sup>72</sup> whereas about Domergue he merely comments that, although he “presented some treatises on grammar to the Institut, otherwise” he had “written nothing very remarkable.”<sup>73</sup> Despite his religious convictions, which made him a defender of the divine origin of language,<sup>74</sup> Sicard learned to appreciate the sensualist theory of language through his work as a teacher of deaf-mutes. According to Sicard, however, language is purely a means of communication; since thought is given to human beings by God, it does not need language in order to function.<sup>75</sup>

The Ideologues often justified this juxtaposition of contradictory ways of explaining linguistic phenomena by claiming that it was necessitated by considering the concrete facts at hand. Thus, the tendency to dispense with theoretical closure was occasionally connected with the “esprit positif.” The Ideologues’ elaboration of the “esprit positif did not, however, necessarily entail an empirical development of sensualism exemplified by the later positivism, but it was at first intended to produce a coherent observation of objects within, and thus demanded the integration of, the various disciplines constituting the “science de l’homme.” The Ideologues found a basis for an empirical procedure above all in the analytic method as it was elaborated by Condillac. Thus, a laudatory remark of Condillac’s analytic method was hardly ever missing in any of the Ideologues’ works. Just as we have already seen with Mercier, it was also true of the Ideologues that ideas from eighteenth-century language debates were adopted as being self-evident, without an awareness of their original connection with sensualism. In this way the theory of cognition bound to individual languages (“penser dans une langue”) was adopted by writers who otherwise advocated a conception of language that largely tended toward rationalism. Lancelin, in his response to a prize question posed by the “Institut National” regarding the influence of signs on ideas, even called his analytic method a method “I have developed” (“méthode analytique que j’ai développée”<sup>76</sup>) and thus made it clear how matter-of-factly the Ideologues used Condillac’s ideas without grasping their philosophical and epistemological implications. It was also characteristic of a

considerable number of Ideologues that they attempted to make Condillac's doctrine conform to the new conditions of post-revolutionary France. Laromiguière, the editor of Condillac's posthumously published work *La Langue des calculs*, thus defended Condillac in his *Leçons de philosophie sur les principes de l'intelligence* against the accusation that his philosophy promoted materialism.<sup>77</sup>

A philosophical debate involving language theory, in which Ideologues appeared as representatives of Condillac's doctrine, had already occurred before the beginning of the official reaction against Enlightenment sensualism. The lectures of the Ideologue Garat at the "Ecole Normale" were criticized by the mystic philosopher Saint-Martin, who directly spoke out against those elements in Garat's philosophy that could be interpreted as being materialistic.<sup>78</sup>

In his arguments, Garat had largely followed Condillac, but he had added a series of ideas taken from Cabanis's anthropology that further intensified the materialistic orientation of his lectures. Saint-Martin fought against the explanation of the genesis of language out of the "langage d'action"<sup>79</sup> as a typical example of the materialistic way of thinking and, in its place, he offered his own theory of the spiritual and active nature of language and its supernatural origin.<sup>80</sup>

Garat recognized in Saint-Martin's objection the attempt to revive ideas from Plato, Descartes, and Malebranche, but he pointed out the further development of "science positive," which he thought would decide the correctness of materialism or idealism: "Spiritualism and materialism both say more than I, but they do not know more. I refuse to climb as high as they, but I am supported by a foundation that is accessible to me and which nothing can shake."<sup>81</sup> Garat meant by this "foundation" "those" "positive facts" among which he counted knowledge about language and the way it functions. As opposed to this, Saint-Martin saw in the debate surrounding the origin and essence of language a fundamental division between materialism and idealism.

There can only be two parties: to the one belong those who maintain that matter is our only driving force—a doctrine which I am totally incapable of distinguishing from materialism; among the others count those who acknowledge that we have an intellectual nature and that we consequently have a driving force within ourselves that corresponds to that which I have called the "sens moral."<sup>82</sup>

In the debate about the origin of language in the "Institut National" the alternative to a decision for or against materialism was thus forced on the Ideologues rather than freely sought out by them.

Despite acknowledging and defending sensualistic principles and especially those that were so important for language theory, such as that concerning reciprocity in the development of language and cognition, many

Ideologues expressed reservations that approached explicit criticism of some aspects of Condillac's doctrine. In his lectures of 1797, Thurot thus spoke out against completely reducing "judgement" to "sensation."<sup>83</sup> The understanding of "attention" as "sensation transformée" and of memory as "sensation prolongée" was also seen as reductionism.<sup>84</sup> After fundamentally acknowledging Condillac's achievement, numerous Ideologues repeatedly indicated that although he had sketched out a brilliant method, he became unfaithful to it and fell victim to the inclination he himself had so often rejected, namely an exaggerated desire to form systems.

As a means of overcoming what they saw as the inadequate elements of Condillac's theory the Ideologues placed particular hopes in anthropology, which was supposed to explain all human forms of life and abilities through a universal consideration of human beings. This was institutionally set into motion by the founding of the "Société des observateurs de l'homme" (1799–1805). Specialists in the areas of philosophy, psychology, medicine, and linguistics were to collaborate and contribute to the expansion of anthropological knowledge.

The new historical situation after the Revolution was particularly decisive for the relationship between the Ideologues and the linguistic theory of the Enlightenment. The attacks undertaken by the forces of philosophical reaction to the Enlightenment, which frequently resulted in attacks against the Ideologues themselves, promoted a distancing from Condillac, and especially with respect to the accusation that sensualism amounted to materialism or at least paved the way for it. The efforts to sanitize sensualism of any materialistic tendencies led several Ideologues to polemicize against Condillac's concept of "sensation transformée" and the associated role of language in the higher development and transformation of sense impressions. The recourse to the Lockean dualism of "sensation" and "reflection" as a moderate form of sensualism that was appropriate to the new situation led various Ideologues to a new conception of the cognitive function of language. For the role of language in thought remained a central problem in the Ideologues' movement. The range of opinion went from Cabanis's mechanical materialism to the spiritualism evident in some Ideologues or former Ideologues.

Characteristic of Cabanis is the revaluation of the climate theory, which in the eighteenth century had already been partially overcome. In his *Rapports du physique et du moral de l'homme* of 1802 he wanted to demonstrate how the climate has an influence on the formation of language by way of the organs of speech, how the predominant sounds of a particular geographical region are imitated by the speakers and how the temperament of people, which is also influenced by the climate, is reflected in language. The character of a people and that of its language thus naturally exist, according to Cabanis, in close connection with one another in that they are influenced by the same climatic factors.<sup>85</sup>

Cabanis's one-sided emphasis of the material, and in particular of the

biological substratum of language, on the basis of whose specific organization the character of an individual language is supposed to be explained, resulted from his mechanistic-materialistic point of view, which even led him to compare the transformation of sense impressions into ideas with the physiological process of digestion.<sup>86</sup>

A number of examples that illustrate some influence of individual languages on cognition led Cabanis to the conclusion that language sometimes determines human behavior.<sup>87</sup> Certain peoples can be privileged by virtue of the language they speak, which would be expressed in a more rapid development of the sciences and arts and in the more liberal formation of the political order, whereas other peoples are limited by their language, which they can hardly overcome.

The reference to linguistic factors that determine the state of knowledge or behavior is, in Cabanis's thought, linked with a relinquishment of any consideration of social and historical causes. To be sure, Cabanis allowed that social and climatic factors interpenetrate one another in their effect on human beings,<sup>88</sup> but his explanation circumvents social factors, even when he is discussing the problem of the influence of language on cognition.

Another expression of the renunciation of a sociohistorical explanation of the relationship between language and thought is the project of a "pasigraphy," which was begun during the era of the Ideologues.<sup>89</sup> This universal system of writing, which was to be comprehensible independently of all individual languages, was supposed to overcome all difficulties in communication and, in addition, to advance the development of the individual sciences by virtue of a universal scientific language. This project drew the criticism of such Ideologues as Destutt de Tracy and Thurot, whose assumption of the reciprocal relationship between language and thought excluded the creation of a universal language that was disengaged from the historical process. If languages can be perfected only in the degree to which the level of knowledge that its speakers possess advances, then the improvement of the methods of acquiring knowledge, including the semiotic components of those methods, must stand in the foreground of interest—not the construction of a universal language that attempts to pre-empt this process. This rejection of universal language as being unhistorical and disassociated from the natural development of knowledge was not, however, accepted by the majority of the Ideologues.

The most significant manifestation of the Ideologues' interest in the relationship between language and thought was the announcement of a public prize question concerning precisely this subject. For the Ideologues made sure that, four decades after the Berlin prize question, the question of the role that language plays in cognition, became, now in France, a topic of an academic contest. The Ideologues dominated the "Class for Moral and Political Sciences" at the "Institut National des Sciences et Arts," which announced as its first prize topic the question concerning the influence of signs on the formation of ideas.

In the following I will reproduce the most important parts of the rather inaccessible text that announced the academic prize question, for it classifies the central theses of the sensualistic theory of signs within a historical summary of the problem surrounding the relationship between knowledge and signs.<sup>90</sup> Condillac's concept of "sensation transformée," or the transformation of sense impressions into ideas with the aid of signs, is placed at the beginning. Finally, the role of signs in scientific thinking leads to the question of the possibilities for improving thinking by perfecting signs.

Among the many authors who throughout the ages have occupied themselves with the human understanding, there are very few who have turned to the means by which its powers can be increased and directed ...

The first philosophers who concerned themselves with written signs, with the accents and articulations of the voice, with the play of facial expressions, with the gestures and different attitudes of the body, saw in these signs, which were either established by nature or invented by human beings, simply the means for the communication of ideas. A deeper investigation brought to light that signs are not only meant to serve communication among two or more people. Despite the authority of several great men who have viewed them as obstacles to the correctness and rapidity of our thoughts, some now dared to maintain that even individual human beings, isolated from all contact with their own kind, need signs in order to combine ideas with one another.

Recently, finally, some have believed that the use of signs will have a much more remarkable effect in the future: the existence of ideas themselves, of the first and sensate ideas, presupposes the existence of signs, and that we would have no ideas whatsoever if we did not possess any signs. Thus signs were seen as an absolute necessity, not only for the communication of ideas, nor merely for the combination of ideas we had already acquired, nor even solely for the formation of new ideas, but for the acquisition of the very first ideas that most immediately arise from the impressions of sense.

If a certain influence of language on the formation of ideas is incontestable and admitted by all concerned, then the same is not true of the *degree* of this influence. Here opinion is divided, and that which one person sees as a convincing line of argument is viewed by the other as an absurd paradox.

The institute expects elaborations that provide new investigations that eliminate the uncertainties that still exist in this important matter and are suited to create agreement concerning it.

Among the numerous questions that are raised by the importance of the topic, the following shall not be disregarded:

1 Is it true that the impressions of sense can be transformed into ideas

only with the aid of signs? Or, which amounts to the same thing, do our ideas, according to their own essence, presuppose the aid of signs?

2 Would the art of thinking be perfect if the art of signs were brought to perfection?

3 Do the sciences in which truth is accepted without any reservation owe this concord to the perfection of their signs?

4 Is it the case that, in the sciences that give rise to eternal disputes, the dissension of opinion is an unavoidable effect of the imprecision of their signs?

5 Is there a means of improving imperfect signs and of making all sciences equally capable of producing convincing arguments?

The text announcing the prize question for 1799 is thus obviously formulated in the spirit of Condillac's sensualistic conception of signs. Yet Joseph-Marie Degérando, who was awarded the prize, wrote a lengthy treatise that, in its polemics against Condillac, abandoned important epistemological tenets of sensualism.<sup>91</sup>

In the political and philosophical situation that developed around the turn of the century, Degérando, who felt himself to be an outsider, was just the man for the Ideologues, since his theory made it possible to dismiss the reproach levelled against them of advocating materialism without having to break openly with sensualism itself. One aspect that was important for the evaluation of language was Degérando's repeated criticism of Condillac's conception of "sensation transformée." Whereas Condillac, precisely by assuming that the constitutive role of language manifests itself in the transition from sense perception to cognition, explained the intellect without recourse to an a priori form of thought or to an inner experience that could not be derived from the world we experience through our senses, Degérando deliberately returned to a Lockean conception of reflection. Condillac, Degérando claimed, grossly exaggerated the constitutive role of language for cognition and had thus fallen prey to an extreme view that resulted from his own precipitate generalization of individual facts.<sup>92</sup>

Because Degérando attacked a central materialistic component of sensualistic epistemology, he could count on the agreement of many Ideologues. As we have already seen, the accusation that the Ideologues continued Enlightenment materialism undoubtedly contributed substantially to their polemics against the concept of "sensation transformée."<sup>93</sup> If the situation was ripe for the reception of Degérando's ideas among the Ideologues, then most of the Ideologues failed at first to recognize that Degérando's final philosophical and epistemological conclusions not only undermined Enlightenment sensualism, but also compromised the Ideologues' modified theory itself.

One factor that points to Degérando's distance from the sensualism of both the Enlightenment and the Ideologues is his emphasis on "attention" and "volonté" as important components of human mental activity

independent of the physical organization of the human body and largely free of sense perceptions. Accordingly, he thought that linguistic signs were not a necessary condition of intellectual capacity. Language, Degérando argued, has a certain significance for the development of reflection only in so far as human beings are forced by communicative activity into turning their attention more precisely to the individual parts of their ideas.<sup>94</sup> Degérando thus rejected Condillac's conception of the reciprocity of the connection between language and thought by arguing for an inner, pre-linguistic capacity of reflection in human beings that develops independently of external influence. This reappropriation and reinterpretation of the Lockean dualism between sensation and reflection and the emphasis on free mental activity finally led to spiritualistic qualities in Degérando's thought.

Degérando saw in Cabanis's materialistic anthropology a direct contradiction of his own position. Cabanis, who was a physician and used the mechanistic-materialistic method of tracing all psychic events to a physical origin as his own point of departure, was destined to arouse Degérando's protest, and not only because of the latter's religious convictions. Degérando saw in Cabanis's determinism a grave violation of his own assumptions about the human mind and its inner activity, which he thought was independent of physiological organization and all external conditions.<sup>95</sup>

When Degérando later identified himself more and more with Napoleon's policies, this resulted not only in the political break with the Ideologues, but in the final philosophical one as well. As a "philosophe converti" he finally went so far as to change sides, as did of another former Ideologue, Maine de Biran, in combating eighteenth-century philosophy under the banner of Restoration ideology.

The polemics against "sensation transformée" carried out under the auspices of the rejection of materialism led Maine de Biran at first to reconsider the role language plays in the cognitive process. When he attributed the ability to convert sense impressions into ideas to the "signe intérieur," which he understood as a phenomenon that could not be more narrowly defined, Maine de Biran reinterpreted the central tenet of Condillac's sensualistic language theory.<sup>96</sup>

A recent publication on the Ideologues, which, to be sure, gives little attention to their theoretical interests in language, is entitled *Il tramonto dell' illuminismo*,<sup>97</sup> which can be approximately rendered as *The Decline of Enlightenment Philosophy*. The development of the theories of former Ideologues such as Degérando and Maine de Biran in particular suggests such a characterization for the elements relating to language theory in the doctrine of the Ideologues. The Enlightenment had fulfilled its role for the bourgeoisie, which had thereby risen to power; and its ideological consequences, including those that arose from ideas that were formulated on the basis of linguistic theory, necessarily brought about reactions that ranged from unease to indignant rejection.

If such a well-known representative of Restoration philosophy such as Bonald later referred to a work on the history of philosophy by Degérando,<sup>98</sup> this indicated that the dissolution of the Ideologues' movement cannot be primarily traced to the crippling of their scientific headquarters in the "Institut National" by the measures set in motion by Napoleon in 1803. The Restoration, understood as a period of intensified reaction, initiated the transition to the leading role played by the eclectic philosophy of Victor Cousin (1792–1867), who held a philosophical world-view that was tailored to the needs of official France and among whose components belonged a decided distancing from Enlightenment sensualism.

Nevertheless, some attempts were also made later on to revive "Idéologie." Jean-François Thurot (1768–1832) thus began in 1830 with the publication of a work on the understanding and reason (*De l'entendement et de la raison*) that was sensualistic in the Ideologues' conception of the term. If Thurot, in the final years of his life, raised fundamental objections against Cousin, then it is also true that he had been one of the first to acknowledge an eclectic procedure as legitimate and thus contributed to the situation in which Cabanis was finally able to appeal to Ideologues or to individuals who stood close to them.<sup>99</sup>

The complicated position of the Ideologues between the Enlightenment and the Restoration, but between two eras of linguistics as well, will require further intensive study. This is particularly true of their role as mediators in the transmission of the Enlightenment legacy of language theory, which the Ideologues transformed and handed down to the thinkers of the first half of the nineteenth century, beginning with the long neglected importance of the Ideologues for Wilhelm von Humboldt.<sup>100</sup>

Wilhelm von Humboldt's turn to the philosophical and comparative study of languages, characteristically motivated at first by anthropological interests, occurred at the time in which he was becoming familiar with French sensualism in Paris in direct contact with the Ideologues. Humboldt noted in particular that they placed "infinite importance on the connection of ideas by means of signs."<sup>101</sup> It is also remarkable that, at the same time, Humboldt read Condillac's *Essay on the Origin of Human Understanding* as well as his treatises *On Systems*, *On Sensations* and *On Animals* and wrote quite extensive excerpts in his diaries, including Condillac's remarks concerning the "génie des langues." Humboldt's own reflections, which later led to the well-known formulation that the difference between languages is not "one of sounds and signs, but a difference of ways of seeing the world,"<sup>102</sup> could certainly have had a theoretical source here.

Humboldt's "linguistic view of the world" is frequently seen as being dependent on Herder and on his description of the connection between the language and mode of thought peculiar to individual peoples. Regardless of whether Herder's own ideas represent a synthesis and elaboration of ideas he received from the French Enlightenment, it has been pointed out that there is no adequately proven argument for Humboldt's having borrowed from

Herder,<sup>103</sup> whereas there can be no doubt about Humboldt's close familiarity with the French language debates.

Humboldt's first acquaintance with the sensualistic theory of language largely occurred between 1797 and 1799 in France, in an intellectual atmosphere that was dominated by the Ideologues. One must, however, take into consideration that Humboldt attempted at that time to correct what he thought was the one-sided position of the Ideologues by using Kantian philosophy, and he expressed his opinion on this matter to representative Ideologues themselves. Humboldt even hoped that reading Kant's philosophy would cause a revolution of philosophical thinking in France and change what was in his opinion its one-sidedly sensualistic orientation. Thus he wrote in October 1798 from Paris to Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi:

There are now several good minds here who eagerly devote their labors to metaphysics and who also feel a great desire to become acquainted with the Kantian variety. But the true moment for a Revolution in this field will not arrive for some time yet. Although they find their philosophy itself to be flawed, they are still completely satisfied with the path onto which Condillac led them and consider it to be the only true one. They don't want to be anything other than analysts, and they distort and trivialize every object that won't succumb to analysis; and they lack the necessary strictness and precision for analysis itself. They have one terrible bugbear: innate ideas; and this encompasses everything that extends into the realm of the inexplicable, whether one calls it an inner intellectual form, or the Ego, or generally that which is original or immediate, or, in the practical realm, reason or the instinct for reason, and so on. One exhausts in vain the richest multitude of forms, one is supposed to be able to break down everything, trace everything back to sensation, which itself can of course no longer cling to anything solid. One cannot even mention necessary positing, the abstraction of all external experience or that which is completely conditionless. All of these are only illusions of reason indulging in metaphysics....

I just mentioned that in philosophy the French proceed in no other way than analytically. On the basis of the prior description of the primary flaws of their educated nature (for the uneducated one is always good), one could perhaps say that they eschew all synthesis; that they acknowledge nothing but what can be explained mechanically; that they do not allow the free production of the mind and the will out of nothing; and even where it, as it were, unconsciously escapes them, for instance when they act or compose literature, they do not give it its full due. Indeed, I think that he who would be able to perform some sort of synthesis in the French language (an action of the mind or the will) in a pure and generally comprehensible way would have solved the problem. "But surely not merely the French?" you will object. And, to be sure, this is very true. For it is at this point that every philosophy has its difficulties.<sup>104</sup>

This statement—which Humboldt, incidentally, has sent confidentially because of his somewhat global comment on the French—certainly does exhibit idealist elements that make it seem less surprising that he particularly esteemed Degérando among the Ideologues. One can surely assume that Humboldt's critical appraisal of Condillac, especially of his concept of "sensation transformée," was influenced by the modified sensualism of such Ideologues as Degérando. When Humboldt made the criticism of Condillac "that everything is explained as a phenomenon, that he fails to comprehend the actual activity of the self, which can be explained no further, and thus everything that arises from this activity is, as it were, degraded to a low level,"<sup>105</sup> then he is coming close to the spiritualistic tendencies of those Ideologues who founded their arguments against materialistic tendencies in Condillac's sensualistic philosophy by emphasizing the intellectual self-activity of human beings.

One aspect of the later predominance of this notion of intellectual self-activity in Humboldt's language theory is the observation that language and thought are "completely and inextricably the same act of intellectual ability."<sup>106</sup> This mystifying "intellectual" ability manifests itself as the spirit of a people in the specificity of their individual language. The spirit of a people and national language form a unity that Humboldt investigated largely in the absence of social and historical considerations. Humboldt's determination of the "inner linguistic form" as the "entirely inner and purely intellectual part" of language, finally, made it easier to make idealistic interpretations that became the point of departure for absolutizing language in theories about the linguistic relativity of thought. In contrast to this development, however, we see fading into the background the evident continuity of the Enlightenment's legacy in Humboldt, which is expressed in his rejection of linguistic determinism while pointing out the possibilities human beings have to produce a creative effect on language and in his emphasis on the similarities among peoples.

## THE VERDICT OF THE RESTORATION

Even though sensualism had begun to lose strength among the Ideologues, and Napoleon's political opposition further contributed to the weakening of their position, there had already been open attacks against it on other fronts. In 1801, the same year in which Napoleon brought about an official reconciliation with the Vatican, a brochure appeared in Paris with the title "Anti-Condillac, or Address to the Modern Ideologues about the Human Soul, its Qualities, its Origin and the Certainty of its Knowledge, its Immortality and its Determination" ("Anti-Condillac, ou harangue aux idéologues modernes, sur l'âme de l'homme, ses facultés constitutives, l'origine et la certitude de ses connaissances, son immortalité et ses destinées").<sup>107</sup>

The condemnation of sensualism became part of the official ideological

program in the era of Restoration, which began in 1814. Hypolyte Taine described a conversation that took place at the University of Paris around 1820, in which he characterized the hostility to which Condillac's philosophy was subjected during that period of intensified reaction to the French Revolution and to the intellectual movement of the Enlightenment, which was seen as wholly or at least partially responsible for its consequences.

"Are you still a sensualist, immoralist and atheist?"

"Why do you say that?"

"Well, after all, you deny that reason is an independent faculty. You deny the existence of innate ideas. You maintain that a perfect science is nothing more than a perfect language. You continue Condillac's line of thinking, thus you can believe in neither truth, nor justice, nor God."

"Great God!"

"You are basically a man of the eighteenth century. Your philosophy destroys the dignity of humanity. You are either a materialist or a skeptic."<sup>108</sup>

For the intellectual leaders of the Restoration such as Bonald and de Maistre, "this detestable Condillac" ("ce détestable Condillac") was "the guiltiest of all the modern conspirators" ("le plus coupable de tous les conjurés modernes") since his philosophy had contributed the most to the systematization of sensualism and to its dissemination in France.<sup>109</sup>

One similarly finds ideologically motivated counter-arguments to sensualistic conceptions of language theory. This is true of the theory of word order, the sensualistic justification of the necessary mobility of language, and the theory of the common origin of language and thought. Linguistic, anthropological, sociological, and political considerations were combined with one another from the perspective of the Restoration.

All of the neologisms that had been so freely created during the Revolution were supposed to be banned from the French vocabulary. It was to be the task of dictionaries to protect the language from the effects of future revolts by subversive minds. Without authoritarian power, it was argued, no orderly social life was possible, and without authoritarian regulation of language, the citizens would not feel any obligations toward social norms. Thus the Academy's dictionary, despite its flaws, had to exercise authoritarian power, "such as it is, it has, and must have, authority, because it did once have it, even over words" ("tel qu'il est, il fait, il doit même faire autorité; car il en faut une, même sur les mots").<sup>110</sup> Degérando had already candidly observed that language in politics was an area in which philosophers do not have the authority to create the definitions of words, but that this is "an attribute of power, or more precisely a privilege of the strongest." Yet he also added that only a government that is exclusively concerned with the "happiness of society" could be interested in a precise use of language and legitimate it.<sup>111</sup> For Bonald, the legitimation of the

political use of language consisted in its agreement with the concerns of the Restoration.

With respect to the sensualistic theory of word order, Bonald supported the counter-position that claimed that language possessed a “natural” word order in the degree to which the social form of the nation in question corresponded to natural laws in general. During the convulsions of the Revolution, he thus argued, “barbaric sentence structures” displaced the noble regularity of French.<sup>112</sup>

Violations of “natural” word order, just like revolutionary neologisms, thus seemed to be an expression of revolt against the natural order of society. Since the rationalistic theory of a permanent natural word order corresponded to an essentially static conception of language, it was possible to cite it here in defense of the existing social, as well as linguistic, order. The stability of language was supposed to express and guarantee the stability of society. The ideology of the Restoration thus opposed the dynamic change of language and the theory that served to legitimate such change. In the lexical realm it did so through authoritarian definitions of words and on the grammatical level through the preservation of a sentence structure that was seen to be natural.

As concerns the origin of language, Bonald and de Maistre were both completely aware of the simultaneous implications for anthropology and social theory that arose from the rejection of the divine origin of language. Condillac was accused in this connection of having mentioned Adam, Eve and the Flood only with apparent agreement in order actually to oppose the Bible. For to maintain that language was created by human beings meant that one denied that the first human beings were placed on earth as completely formed representatives of their species and, moreover, as members of human society. That is, it meant that one denied that the Creator of all perfection had also created society and had thus given it the inviolacy of having been derived from a higher order.<sup>113</sup>

This rejection of Enlightenment language theories was situated within the global rejection of sensualistic philosophy in general: Locke’s theory of the sensate origin of ideas prepared the way for materialism and was thus eagerly adopted by eighteenth-century philosophy. Condillac contributed most heavily to the spread of this system, and through his theory concerning the shared origin of language and thought he materialized the origin of our ideas and thus disputed the dignity of the intellectual nature of humanity.<sup>114</sup>

Bonald’s and de Maistre’s intense criticism of sensualism and, in particular, of sensualist language theory thus did not take place in the form of merely occasional utterances about the politics of the day. This critique was, rather, a component of a theoretically elaborated ideological system that was intended to lend legitimacy to the Restoration. With their efforts to systematize the concerns of the Restoration, Bonald and de Maistre could not ignore the importance of problems relating to language theory within

Enlightenment philosophy. Bonald thus integrated, in conscious reaction to the Enlightenment, linguistic considerations into his political theory, even going so far as to grant a fundamental role to arguments relating to language philosophy.

Characteristically, Bonald did not just begin at the dawn of the Restoration, but as far back as 1797–8. During these years, Bonald lay in hiding in Paris after he had secretly returned to France, which he had left in the wake of the Revolution. And in his Parisian hiding-place he labored on his two works, the *Essai analytique sur les lois naturelles de l'ordre social, ou du pouvoir, du ministre et du sujet dans la société* and his *Législation primitive considérée dans les derniers temps par les seules lumières de la raison*. In these two works, which were thus revised in Paris during the time in which the Ideologues enjoyed their triumph there, Bonald placed the arguments of language theory in the service of legitimating an ideology that opposed the Enlightenment and represented a conservative conception of society that drew its strength from this opposition.<sup>115</sup>

Bonald later expanded on this point of departure in greater detail. His *Recherches philosophiques sur les premiers objets des connaissances morales* of 1818 extensively and prominently treats the problem of the origin of language. The first chapter of the text—“De la philosophie”—is followed by a chapter of the same size entitled “De l’origine du langage.” The beginning of this chapter makes clear the importance Bonald felt must be attached to the problem of language origin because of its implications for anthropology and social theory: “Philosophers vary in their opinion on the question of the origin of language, just as they do in all other questions that affect human beings and society.”<sup>116</sup> Following his extensive arguments with which he wished to prove the divine origin of language as the only possible explanation of the problem is a further chapter that was supposed to provide the same proof for the origin of writing, “De l’origine de l’écriture.”<sup>117</sup> Only then does one encounter the chapters “De la physiologie,” “Définition de l’homme,” “De la pensée,” “De l’expression des idées,” etc. There is another chapter, also aimed specifically against the consequences of sensualism, in which Bonald sought to prove that the “soul,” that is the cognitive capacity, is not a result of physical properties.<sup>118</sup> Bonald also did not neglect to include the obligatory chapter on animals in his general refutation of sensualism.<sup>119</sup>

Bonald’s conception of language can be characterized as an expression in language theory of a newly conceived rationalistic dualism that quite consciously took the tenets of Enlightenment sensualism into account in order to reject them all the more convincingly. He thus defined a human being as “an intelligence served by bodily organs” (“une intelligence servie par des organes”).<sup>120</sup> Although Bonald saw the intellectual essence of humanity as residing in a substance that was expressly different from that of the organs, he granted an important role to the sensory existence of human beings, which comes to the fore in his language theory.

Bonald knew the pertinent texts by Condillac and Rousseau well enough to quote them in detail. He even adopted Condillac's postulate concerning the reciprocal dependency between language and thought in order to derive a fundamental proof of God from his perspective. Since, Bonald reasoned, language and thought determine one another, but their natural genesis either together or individually is inconceivable (Bonald here even referred to Rousseau's comments on the difficulties of a natural explanation<sup>121</sup>), cognition and language, as well as the social form of coexistence, were only explicable as a divine creation. Articulated phonetic language as an expression and instrument of thought is much too complicated and much too important for the social life of human beings to be an accidental creation of human beings themselves. The existence of and the interdependence of language and thought thus became the proof of a supernatural creation of society, thought and language. Bonald found support for his aprioristic positing of language, thought, and society in Beauzée's article on "langue" in the *Encyclopédie*, which in 1767 had already contradicted the sensualistic theory.<sup>122</sup>

Bonald's ideological transformation of some of Condillac's ideas did not hinder him from beginning his own article on the language of politics ("De la Langue de la Politique")<sup>123</sup> with an affirmative citation of Condillac's opinion that "a science is a well formed language."<sup>124</sup> The flawed form of the "language of politics" demonstrated for Bonald the particularly backward state of this "science," which he claimed had in fact been partly responsible for the Revolution. It goes without saying that Bonald's suggestions for the perfection of political terminology, beginning with the definition of "natural rights" and "human rights" ("droit de la nature et des gens"),<sup>125</sup> express the standpoint of a conservative social theory.

Bonald's demand for the necessary linguistic authority of a dictionary that would be conducive to the maintenance of the public order thus very much had its background in language theory. Dictionaries and grammars are a kind of cultural codex for the state of society, just as laws and ordinances express and guarantee its political organization: "Dictionaries and grammars are consequently collections of judged causes, and, as it were, the statutes of different literary states, just as the collections of laws and regulations are the codes of political societies."<sup>126</sup>

With the intention of making linguistic considerations the supports of a specific ideology and social theory, together with the attempt to place the political usage and efficacy of language in the service of an ideology, Bonald thus took up the endeavors of the Enlightenment in order to lead them in the opposite direction.

The role of Bonald's conception of language for his restorative image of society was thus an essential aspect of his negation of the Revolution, which was undertaken as a negation of Enlightenment philosophy. He viewed the central philosophical point of danger in sensualism and its language theory, so that Bonald insisted on the equation of "philosophe sensualiste" with

“philosophe matérialiste.”<sup>127</sup> His successor at the “Académie Française” was thus able to extol Bonald for having tirelessly fought against the “eighteenth century” with regard to the most important questions we face.<sup>128</sup>

## 15 Concluding remarks: assessment of the discussion of language in the French Enlightenment

By locating the theoretical conceptions of language I have analyzed here within their contexts in the history of philosophy generally we have discovered that they were part of an expression of anthropological concerns, and in some cases with implications for social theory, in seventeenth—and eighteenth-century debates about the place of human beings within the universe. I will first emphasize this role of the theoretical conceptions of language as a medium of expressing ideological concerns before I move, in conclusion, to a consideration of some of the related steps in the development of what we would properly call linguistics.

A concern that was so central to the Enlightenment as the elaboration of a “perspective on humans as beings who were natural and integrated into the general context of nature”<sup>1</sup> was advanced to a considerable degree within arguments specifically concerning the theory of language, whether this was about the origin of language, the relationship between language and thought, between that of “mots” and “choses,” the “abuse” of words, or even the problem of word order. This linguistically founded view of humanity supported the new, historical perspective of the Enlightenment and became partly associated with its conclusions about social theory.

To a great extent, this development occurred as the conscious reworking of linguistic questions that had been raised in the seventeenth century from the standpoint of a rationalistic anthropology. Even the course of the debates about language confirms that grappling with Descartes’s rationalistic dualism, and in particular with his doctrine of innate ideas that we receive from some supernatural source, was constitutive of French, although less so of German, Enlightenment philosophy. In France, the further-reaching philosophical consequences of Locke’s sensualism—which, as an alternative to Descartes, was an important source of the French Enlightenment—was developed by considering the theory of language, which in itself went beyond Locke’s philosophy.

The linguistically substantiated rejection of the notion that an individual who was equipped with all intellectual and communicative capacities stood at the beginning of history entailed, in its place, an entirely new conception of the role both of humanity in the genesis and development of society, as well

as of society in the formation of human personality. The arguments pertaining to language theory occupied a place in the elaboration of a view of the world that recognized human society as a product of history—that is of human beings themselves—and thus no longer acknowledged the existing state of society as the expression of a supernatural order. The recognition that human beings are formed by their general environment led to the conclusion that the environment must therefore be made humane, as Marx retrospectively characterized the sensualistic foundations of the most progressive eighteenth-century social theories.<sup>2</sup>

The new ideas about the theory of language are thus to be understood as a part of Enlightenment thought as a whole, which advanced to new scientific and sociological insights and placed nature, human beings, and society within a historical dimension of development by replacing the view of an order that was guaranteed by supernatural powers with a secular image of the world and humanity. The rejection of *a priori*, innate ideas in anthropology and language theory, of the doctrine of preformation in biology, of an ahistorical natural right in social theory—all of these were aspects of the rejection of the belief in pre-established structures governing a world that was increasingly becoming the object of scientific investigation. Within this framework, a secularized theory of language developed as a component and consequence of a secularized theory of humanity and society in general.

Even if the rejection of Cartesian epistemology and of its linguistic as well as anthropological implications represents an important historical discontinuity in the French Enlightenment, my study has nonetheless shown that the developments during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries exhibited an interplay of continuity and discontinuity in which the further development of Cartesian language theory represents an essential part. Since the anthropologically relevant linguistic concerns of the French Enlightenment were, to a degree that had been previously disregarded, already prefigured in the seventeenth century, the adoption of Lockean sensualism did not mean the beginning of a completely new orientation; rather, it provided a programmatic basis for the further development of what naturally emerged from the seventeenth-century philosophical discussion of language.

More important perhaps than the ideas about language theory that contemporary sensualist thinkers such as Hobbes, Gassendi, and Comenius expressed were the developments taking place within Cartesianism itself. My investigations have suggested that one should not only distinguish between two lines of development within Descartes's legacy, which have their origin in his physics and metaphysics, but that one ought to view the debates extending from his psychophysiology as a third line and one that was especially important for theories of language.

Descartes's metaphysics, which was relevant to the discussion of language primarily in the form of his doctrine of non-corporeal ideas and his hypothesis of innate ideas, found its linguistic application in the

rationalistically inspired theory of the origin of language and in the elaboration of rationalistic grammar theory, which was expressed in an exemplary fashion in the doctrine of the “ordre naturel” in word order.

It has been repeatedly pointed out that Descartes’s physics was a source of the mechanistic materialism of the Enlightenment. It had already been recognized in the seventeenth century that it was possible to derive a materialistic view of the world from Descartes’s physics. When, in the middle of the eighteenth century, La Mettrie explicitly referred to Descartes in his own materialistic program, the sound-producing automatons constructed by the brilliant mechanic Vaucanson<sup>3</sup> provided him with welcome arguments for his concept of the “Homme machine.” La Mettrie hailed Vaucanson’s “flute player” as a preliminary stage in the construction of a mechanism that would reproduce human speech. The construction of a speaking mechanism would have to be possible, he thought, since the human body represented a kind of a clockwork of the highest technical perfection.<sup>4</sup> With that, La Mettrie had transformed Descartes’s theory about the reproducibility of the mechanism governing the human production of sounds, which he saw as merely a matter of the body. But La Mettrie’s philosophical interpretation of this notion was diametrically opposed to Descartes’s intentions, for he now made it into an argument for the existence of matter that both can feel and is capable of cognition. When, at the end of the eighteenth century, a “speaking machine” was actually successfully built, its inventor did not, however, profess La Mettrie’s philosophy.<sup>5</sup>

It is characteristic of La Mettrie’s materialism that he also referred to Descartes’s mechanics by using the example of the speaking automaton. One finds a continuation of La Mettrie’s mechanical materialism in Cabanis, whose overemphasis of the purely physiological components of language led to the renunciation of further-reaching insights that had, moreover, already been formulated within sensualistic language theory. The development of sensualistic language theory that took place after the appearance of Condillac’s *Essai sur l’origine des connaissances humaines*, and specifically its attempt to provide a dialectical explanation of the reciprocal development of society, language, and thought, all remained external to the mechanistic-materialistic position that Cabanis had adopted.

In comparison to La Mettrie, we do not find in Condillac, who was doubtlessly influenced by the seventeenth century (although not in the same way as La Mettrie), a mechanistic explanation of thought and language placed in the foreground. Precisely in his explanation of the genesis and development of language and thought, Condillac’s *Essai* exhibits, rather, a remarkably dialectical movement. Diderot soon thereafter very explicitly announced his rejection of La Mettrie’s mechanistic views by placing at the beginning of his *Ideas concerning the Interpretation of Nature* the following maxim as the necessary requirement for their understanding: “A human being is no machine.”<sup>6</sup> And several years later he saw himself forced to

criticize the mechanistic and materialistic components of Helvétius's view of humanity.<sup>7</sup>

When Condillac went beyond Locke by including language in a much more rigorous way, he found he could take up the threads of the language debate that had been stimulated by Descartes's psychophysiology. This attempt to explain the co-operation between spirit and matter, which had been postulated as governing human nature, had unleashed conflicting points of view that extended to problematizing the rationalistic conception of language. Condillac thus elaborated certain seventeenth-century ideas with regard to such important questions as those concerning word order and the emotional use of language.

In his conception of "sensation transformée," finally, which was the diametrical opposite to the "cogito ergo sum" and to the contemporary sensualistic response, "primum adest tibi corpus," Condillac sublated the idea that human intellectual abilities and language gradually arise from physical, or corporeal, conditions. He thus placed language, thought, and society in the historical perspective of a reciprocal development that is influenced by those developing social needs themselves.

As a contribution to anti-feudalistic ideology in general, the sensualistic theory of language necessarily aroused the displeasure of the guardians of the Restoration, who viewed it as part of a subversive philosophy.

Language theory, which acted as a medium of a secular view of humanity and of a historical world-view, also resulted, however, in linguistic insights that marked the path taken by modern linguistics. From the broad spectrum of topics that made it seem appropriate to call the Enlightenment era a "Century of Language Debate" I selected here merely a few of the issues that were clearly connected with anthropological and sociological questions. Some new studies examine numerous other subjects to which the eighteenth century contributed linguistic knowledge and underscore how questionable the long-held opinion was that the beginning of linguistics, "properly speaking," did not occur until the nineteenth century.

In view of the varied and even contradictory suggestions for linguistic thought that arose from Descartes's philosophy, it is indeed problematic to assume that there was a single, unbroken line of thought, which ran from the seventeenth century, through the Enlightenment and into modern times, that was exclusively a development of Descartes's rationalism and which one could call "Cartesian Linguistics."<sup>8</sup> This attempt to use history to shore up a modern theory inspired by rationalism excludes precisely those components from Descartes's philosophy which encountered the most forceful criticism of the Enlightenment, which often enough employed its own language theory to make this criticism.

New insights arose from the topics I have examined here concerning the origin of language, the relationship between language and thought, the link between language and society and the role of social communicative needs, the relationship between the specificity and historicity of languages,

fundamental questions of syntax in connection with the problem of word order, and even the political application of language.

The issues which were discussed in the eighteenth century under the rubric of the “abus des mots,” were basically the same as those which we today call “manipulation,” without realizing to what degree they had caused advocates of Enlightenment to criticize language and society.

The theoretical justification of a historical dimension in the development of language, as well as the emphasis on the specificity and intrinsic value of individual languages, were conclusions that from the beginning implicitly resided within sensualistic language theory and whose application we saw especially clearly in the problem of word order.

By overcoming the assumption that there was an a priori “natural order” of words, which was held to be an expression of the natural order of ideas, the path was opened to perceive the linguistic specificity of word order and a historical and functional perspective was gained concerning fundamental syntactic problems. The modern theory of functional sentence perspectives is a more intensive and detailed expansion of what originally arose from the eighteenth-century debate. To be sure, it took a long time before modern syntax research became conscious of its own origins.<sup>9</sup>

The move away from the Enlightenment, which since the Restoration became the dominant trend in the official science of the nineteenth century, also made an impartial reception of its linguistic ideas more difficult. When, at the end of the nineteenth century, Michel Bréal, one of the founders of semantics, referred to Condillac, he addressed a fundamental question, namely the rejection of the concept of language that, under the influence of the natural sciences, viewed language as a kind of independent organism and thus failed to recognize its social nature. As opposed to this view, Bréal felt that Condillac and the Ideologues had been closer to the truth since their conception of the sign illuminated language in its complex relationship with social knowledge, instead of subjecting it to the laws of natural science.<sup>10</sup>

The philosophical justification of such a fundamental thesis in language theory as the notion concerning the reciprocal determination of language and thought, which was of course connected with the simultaneously cognitive and communicative function of linguistic signs, resulted, as we have seen, from the rejection of a dualistic opposition between non-corporeal thought and material signs. The question suggests itself whether overcoming the dualistic conception of language and its attendant assumption of an unavoidable discrepancy between sign and cognition was not a necessary condition for Saussure’s conception of signs as an inseparable unity formed by the “signifiant” and the “signifié.”

The emphasis on the cognitive function of language and its sociohistorical character also motivated a new conception of the problem of arbitrariness. If Condillac considered the term “arbitraire” to be misleading, he wanted to emphasize the sociohistorical and functional nature of the linguistic sign without denying the absence of a mutual inner determination of sign form

and meaning which we still today call arbitrariness. The really new aspect of this notion consisted in the fact that it raised the question of how those qualities came to be on the basis of which language, in view of the arbitrary nature of its signs, can function and that, from this perspective, the qualities of analogy and system came into view.

Ferdinand de Saussure outlined a similar cluster of questions in a more concentric fashion and made them into a supporting element of his language theory.<sup>11</sup> With this remark I do not wish to claim that Condillac was a source of Saussure's<sup>12</sup> ideas, or to assume that their occasional agreements on some points shared a common philosophical basis. More precisely: the assumption that there was a mutual determination of language and thought and the conceptions of the linguistic sign that were derived from it, which were established during the eighteenth century within the context of philosophical controversies, do not possess the same ideological relevance in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

It has apparently remained a constant feature of the history of science that theoretical insights that were originally motivated by an ideological position can, in the course of history, lose all connection with the circumstances of their inception when they are incorporated into other theories and are in the process more or less transfigured. After the theory of the reciprocal determination of language and thought had first been developed as a component of a thorough-going sensualism, it appeared in a great variety of different guises, and sometimes in the works of writers who, on the one hand, distanced themselves somewhat from the philosophical underpinnings of the idea, such as Herder and several Ideologues, and, on the other, who completely disavowed them, such as Humboldt or Bonald, who went so far as to transform the notion of the reciprocal determination of language and thought into an argument against sensualism.

At the other end of the spectrum, Condillac had integrated the notion of the universality of the cognitive and linguistic faculties, which originally stemmed from rationalistic philosophy, into his sensualistic system by postulating it on the basis of the universality of human sense experience and its physical foundations rather than on the basis of an a priori "ratio."

Similarly, the principles of explanation that were used to argue against the theory of an a priori natural word order were first drawn from sensualistic philosophy, yet soon thereafter they were in part taken up by opponents of sensualism such as Beauzée and Mercier.

We thus see that aspects of language theory that, when they were established, exhibited distinct ideological tendencies, can subsequently circulate in various forms: as common linguistic intellectual property that is potentially free of ideology, as being ideologically convertible, and, finally, as self-evident facts.

It is in any case clear that the ideological implications of the problem of the origin of language remained alive well after the eighteenth century. Despite its speculative trappings, the sensualistic theory of language origin

has basically found universal confirmation. Today we note an intensive interest in problems relating to communication in connection with the origin of humanity, both in the evolutionary and behavioral sciences.<sup>13</sup> Once more, however, an insufficient consideration of the eighteenth century is displayed when, in a work with the title *The Evolution of Language and Reason*, the constitutive function of language in thought is viewed as a “new” theory.<sup>14</sup>

Even if, ever since the institutionalization of linguistics, questions concerning language theory are no longer as directly connected with ideological motives as they were during the centuries in which thinking about language primarily occurred within entire philosophical systems, ideological considerations remain nonetheless one of the agents of mediation by which our discipline is brought into connection with the development of society and its contradictions. If we view as our goal “a form of theoretical reflection that rests on a familiarity with the history of thought and its achievements,”<sup>15</sup> then in the historiography of linguistics those complex factors of development which are characteristic for an entire era deserve special consideration.

# Notes

## INTRODUCTION

- 1 On the anthropology of the Enlightenment see Duchet (1971), Formigari (1972, 1981), Goldschmidt (1974), Krauss (1978), Ludovico (1979), Moravia (1967–74), Poliakov (1971), Schröder (1977), Suchodolski (1976), Verri (1975, 1981), Wokler (1976–81); the connections between anthropology and linguistics are noted above all by Formigari, Krauss, Verri and Wokler.
- 2 In addition to the older studies by Harnois (1929) and Sahlin (1928) see, for example, the more recent works by Aarsleff (1970–9), Auroux (1979), Chevalier (1968), Christmann (1967), Coseriu (1972–5), Droixhe (1978), Formigari (1970–3), Haßler (1984), Joly (1970–82), Juliard (1970), Montréal-Wickert (1977), Ricken (1978), Robinet (1978), Rosiello (1967–75), Schulenberg (1973), Sgard (1982), Stefanini (1969).
- 3 Translator's note: The present translations of the French quotations are based on the original texts when these were supplied by the author or, when this was not the case, on Ulrich Ricken's own translations of the French.

## 1 INTERPRETATIONS OF LANGUAGE AS AN ARGUMENT FOR AND AGAINST DUALISM: DESCARTES AND HIS SENSUALISTIC OPPONENTS IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

- 1 One finds a new summary and commentary on Descartes's remarks on language in Coseriu (1972–5) and Hildebrandt (1976). Among the critics of Chomsky's *Cartesian Linguistics*, Hildebrandt in particular emphasizes the connection between Descartes's philosophical system and his comments on language, while Aarsleff (1970 and 1971b) corrects Chomsky's interpretation of Descartes's conception of innate ideas within the larger framework of the history of philosophy.
- 2 N.Boileau, "Arrest burlesque," in *Œuvres complètes* (1966), pp. 327–30.
- 3 On the authorship of the "Arrest burlesque," see Adam III, pp. 118f.
- 4 J.de la Fontaine, *Fables* in *Œuvres complètes* (1872–6), pp. 49ff., 206ff.; see also his *Discours à Madame de la Sablière (Sur l'âme des animaux)* (1967).
- 5 Estienne (1972), p. 551.
- 6 Arnauld, *Règles*, cited in Kunow (1926), p. 132.
- 7 On predecessors of the concept of "raison" in the Port-Royal *Grammar*, which was only partially influenced by Cartesianism, see V.Salmon's review of Chomsky's *Cartesian Linguistics*, in *Journal of Linguistics* 5 (1969), pp. 165–87.
- 8 See Weinrich (1960), pp. 4ff.

- 9 Vaugelas (1936), Préface, p. v.
- 10 Ibid., p. viii.
- 11 Ibid., p. ix.
- 12 See Ricken (1971) and (1978).
- 13 P.Bayle, "Rosarius," in his *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (1697).
- 14 Marx/Engels, II, p. 131.
- 15 R.Descartes, *Lettres à Regius* (1959), pp. 136f.
- 16 J.O.de la Mettrie, *Œuvres philosophiques* (1751), pp. 70f.
- 17 Descartes summarized his psycho-physiology in his treatise *Les passions de l'âme* (1966).
- 18 Cf. Boutroux (1900) and Ambrosi (1898).
- 19 R.Descartes, *Œuvres complètes* (1897–1908), VI, pp. 112.
- 20 R.Descartes, *Les Passions de l'âme* (1966), pp. 99f, 105 (= articles 44 and 50).
- 21 Descartes, *Œuvres*, I, pp. 76–82
- 22 Ibid., p. 82
- 23 R.Descartes, *Discours de la méthode* (1967), pp. 59f.
- 24 Descartes, *Discourse on Method* (1985), p. 139.
- 25 Ibid., pp. 139f.
- 26 Ibid., p. 140.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 P.Gassendi, *Disquisitio metaphysica* (1962), p. 152.
- 29 Descartes, *Discours* (1967), p. 140f.
- 30 Ibid., p. 141.
- 31 Ibid.
- 32 Descartes, *Les Passions* (1966), 105, article 50.
- 33 Descartes, *Discours* (1967), pp. 422f.
- 34 Cf. on Gassendi's position within the history of philosophy Gregory (1961), Hess (1939), and Robinet (1978).
- 35 See Hess, pp. 166ff.
- 36 The "Objections" by Hobbes and Gassendi, with Descartes's response, are included within the latter's *Méditations*. Gassendi subsequently commented on the matter once more and even more extensively in his *Disquisitio* against Descartes.
- 37 Cited in Descartes, *Œuvres*, VII, p. 269.
- 38 Ibid., p. 271.
- 39 Ibid., p. 269.
- 40 See Robinet (1978), p. 133f.
- 41 Descartes, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes* (1985), trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch, II, pp. 125f. Cited as well in Descartes, *Œuvres*, IX, p. 138. The Port-Royal *Logic* cites in its first chapter Hobbes's objection and Descartes's counter-argument.
- 42 Ibid., p. 126.
- 43 Descartes, *Œuvres*, IX, pp. 154ff.
- 44 A.Arnauld and P.Nicole, *La Logique ou l'art de penser* [1662] (1965), Chapter I.
- 45 On Cureau de la Chambre see Foerster (1936) and Piobetta (1937).
- 46 Cited in Descartes, *Discours* (1967), pp. 420ff.
- 47 M.Cureau de la Chambre, *L'art de connoître les hommes* (1669), pp. 93ff.; *Le système de l'âme*, pp. 432f.
- 48 Cf. Bouillier (1868/1970).
- 49 An external impetus for this came from the Abbé de Prades's dissertation, which was inspired by sensualist philosophy and which, when it was submitted and defended at the Sorbonne in 1751, unleashed the scandal known as the "Affaire de Prades." The contemporary anti-sensualist campaign was directed

above all against the *Encyclopédie*, which began to appear in 1751. See below, Chapter 2, pp. 90ff.

## 2 LANGUAGE AND THE AFFECTS IN THE PORT-ROYAL LOGIC

- 1 On the Port-Royal *Grammar* and *Logic* and their authors, see Amirova (1980), Brekle (1964, 1967, 1976), Carré (1887), Chevalier (1967, 1968, 1972), Clerico (1972), Coseriu (1972–5), Del Noce (1937), Donzé (1967), Foucault (1966), France (1972), Harnois (1929), Hildebrandt (1976), Kunow (1926), Lakoff (1976), Liebmann (1902), Marin (1975), Miel (1969), Montréal-Wickert (1977), Munteano (1956a), Percival (1976), Rosetti (1969), Rosiello (1967), Salmon (1969), Uitti (1969), Verga (1972), Zimmermann (1910). For further information on the literature, see Brekle (1975) and Porset (1977, “Grammatista”). On Pascal see Brunet, G. (1959), France (1972), Lafuma (1958), Laporte (1950), Le Guerin (1971), Lohde (1936), Marin (1975), Miel (1969), Topliss (1966).
- 2 Cf. Salmon (1969).
- 3 Cf. Lancelot’s foreword to the Port-Royal *Grammar*.
- 4 Cf. Hildebrandt (1976).
- 5 Arnauld/Nicole (1965), p. 26 (“Second discours, contenant la réponse aux objections qu’on a faites contre cette Logique”). The first chapter of the first main section thus treats “Des idées selon leur nature et leur origine.”
- 6 Arnauld/Nicole, Première partie, ch. I.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 François (1939).
- 11 Pascal, *Œuvres* (1908–25), IX, p. 271.
- 12 Ibid., p. 275.
- 13 Ibid., p. 277.
- 14 B.Pascal, *Pensées*, I, pp. 99, 104ff.; II, pp. 423f., 176f.
- 15 Ibid., II, p. 123.
- 16 Ibid., II, p. 88.
- 17 Ibid., I, p. 120.
- 18 Ibid., I, p. 105.
- 19 Arnauld/Nicole, Première partie, ch. XI.
- 20 Ibid.; on the same problem in Descartes, see above, Chapter 1.
- 21 Ibid., Première partie, Chapter XII.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Pascal, *Pensées*, I, p. 34.

## 3 CORDEMOY AND DUALISM: CONSEQUENCES OF A CARTESIAN THEORY OF SIGNS

- 1 On Cordemoy’s language theory, see Brekle in Cordemoy (1677, reprint 1970), Brekle in Sebeok (1975a), pp. 347ff., Clair and Girbal in Cordemoy, *Œuvres philosophiques* (1968), Droixhe (1978), Leroy (1966, 1970), Ricken (1965, 1978, 1979), Tolmer (1938).
- 2 “Lettre Ecrite à un sçavant Religieux de la Compagnie de Jésus: Pour montrer I. Que le Système de Monsieur Descartes, et son opinion touchant les bêtes, n’ont rien de dangereux. II. Et que tout ce qu’il en a écrit semble être tiré du premier chapitre de la Genèse.” This text, which is extant in manuscript, was printed

twice as an appendix to Cordemoy's *Discours physique de la parole* under the title "Lettre écrite au R.P.Cossart de la Compagnie de Jésus, pour montrer que tout ce que Monsieur Descartes a écrit du Système du Monde, et de l'âme des Bêtes, semble être tiré du premier Chapitre de la Genèse," in G.de Cordemoy, *Œuvres philosophiques* (1968), pp. 257–76.

- 3 Cf. Ricken (1965) and Leroy (1966, 1970).
- 4 G.de Cordemoy, *Discours physique* (1677), pp. 103ff.
- 5 Ibid., pp. 83ff.
- 6 Ibid., pp. 32ff.
- 7 Ibid., p. 141.
- 8 Ibid., p. 143.
- 9 Ibid., p. 138.
- 10 Ibid., pp. 139f.
- 11 Ibid., p. 58.
- 12 Ibid., pp. 145f.
- 13 Ibid., p. 149.

#### **4 THE CARTESIAN ARGUMENT: RATIONALISM AND EMPIRICISM IN BERNARD LAMY'S CONCEPTION OF LANGUAGE**

- 1 On Bernard Lamy's rhetoric, see Girbal (1964), Rodis-Lewis (1967, 1968), France (1972), François (1959), Ricken (1978).
- 2 Lamy (1676), pp. 44f.
- 3 "Comment on peut exprimer les passions, et les mouvements de notre âme," *ibid.*, pp. 37f.
- 4 Ibid., p. 39.
- 5 Ibid., p. 77.
- 6 Ibid., p. 113.
- 7 Ibid., p. 210.
- 8 Ibid., pp. 210f.
- 9 "Chaque climat, chaque siècle a son style." This formulation is even part of the title of a chapter, see Lamy (1676), p. 221.
- 10 Ibid., pp. 210f.
- 11 J.-J.Rousseau, *Œuvres complètes* (1966–9), I, p. 238.
- 12 Girbal (1964), pp. 36ff.
- 13 Ibid., p. 45.

#### **5 LANGUAGE AND SENSE PERCEPTION IN THE CONTROVERSY BETWEEN ARNAULD AND MALEBRANCHE**

- 1 On the controversy surrounding the "imagination" in seventeenth-century language debates, see Munteano (1956, 1956a, 1967), Pizzorusso (1968), Ricken (1971), Verga (1972).
- 2 P.N.de la Malebranche, *De la recherche de la vérité* (1946–65), Livre premier: "Des sens," Livre deuxième: "De l'imagination."
- 3 Ibid., Livre deuxième, troisième partie.
- 4 A description of this controversy can be found in B.Gibert, *De la véritable Eloquence* (1703), *Jugemens des savans* (1725).
- 5 Cf. Gibert (1725), p. 337.
- 6 Cited *ibid.*, pp. 338f.
- 7 Cited *ibid.*, p. 342.

- 8 Cited in Arnauld/Brulart de Sillery.  
 9 Cited in Gibert (1725), p. 343.  
 10 Ibid., p. 337; see also N.Boileau-Despréaux, *Œuvres complètes* (1966), p. 703.  
 11 Arnauld/Brulart de Sillery (1695), p. 235.  
 12 Cited in Gibert (1725), p. 338.  
 13 Ibid., p. 339. Cf. Romans X, 17.  
 14 Ibid., p. 342.  
 15 Ibid., p. 339.  
 16 Arnauld developed this counter-position to Malebranche above all in his work *Des vrayes et des fausses idées* (1683).  
 17 Ibid., ch. XXVIII: “Diverses réflexions, sur ce que dit l’auteur de la Recherche de la vérité qu’on ne peut être entièrement assuré de l’existence des corps que par la foi.” Here Arnauld opposed Malebranche with the argument that it was precisely language that proved to us the existence of bodies. Arnauld formulated his fundamental disagreement with Malebranche as a preamble to his work *Des vrayes et des fausses idées*.

Où l’on croit avoir démontré que ce qu’en dit l’auteur du livre de la Recherche de la vérité n’est appuyé que sur de faux préjugés et que rien n’est plus mal fondé que ce qu’il prétend: Que nous voyons toutes choses en Dieu.

- 18 Sainte-Beuve (1912), Port-Royal, V, p. 356.  
 19 Cited in R.Descartes, *Œuvres complètes* (1897–1908), IX, p. 153ff.  
 20 Ibid.  
 21 Zimmermann (1910), pp. 10ff.  
 22 Locke had Arnauld’s book, *Des vrayes et des fausses idées*, sent to England and then himself wrote a work against Malebranche’s notion of the “vision of God”: *Examination of P.Malebranche’s opinion of our seeing all things in God* (written in 1693, see Locke 1978).  
 23 Gibert (1725), p. 339.  
 24 Ch. A.Crusius, *Weg zur Gewißheit und Zuverlässigkeit der menschlichen Erkenntnis* (1747), p. 77.

## 6 LANGUAGE AND THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL EVALUATION OF THE SENSES FROM DESCARTES TO LOCKE AND DU BOS: THE OUTCOME OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

- 1 Cf. Schober (1966, 1970a), Lanson (1929), Michéa (1938).  
 2 Cf. Lanson (1929).  
 3 Letter from J.B.Rousseau to Brossette (24 June, 1715), cited in *Correspondance de J.B.Rousseau et de Brossette*, I, p. 15.  
 4 N.Boileau-Despréaux, *Art poétique* in *Œuvres complètes* (1859), chant. III.  
 5 Dumonceaux (1975).  
 6 See Ricken (1978), pp. 66f.  
 7 F.-L.de Fénelon, *Dialogues sur l’éloquence* (1774), pp. 67, 70, 74, 76, 79, 81, 83.  
 8 Ibid., p. 68.  
 9 B.Gibert *Jugemens des savants* (1725), p. 383.  
 10 A.-M.de Ramsay, *Liscours sur le poème épique* (1781), p. XXVI.  
 11 Ricken (1978), pp. 69f.  
 12 Gamaches (1718), pp. 88ff.  
 13 J.B.Du Bos, *Réflexions* (1733), II, p. 358.  
 14 Munteano (1956b), pp. 337ff.; Bonno (1950). The standard work on Du Bos is still Lombard (1913).  
 15 Du Bos, *Réflexions*, I, Section XXXIII.

- 16 Ibid., I, pp. 292, 296.
- 17 Ibid., p. 297.
- 18 Ibid., II, Section XXXVI.
- 19 Dockhorn (1949).
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 See Krauss (1960), p. 53.
- 22 Gibert (1725).
- 23 J.O.de la Mettrie, *Œuvres philosophiques* (1751), pp. 70f.
- 24 P.Bayle, *Œuvres diverses* (1727–31), IV, p. 834.
- 25 B.de Fontenelle, *Œuvres* (1757–61), IX, p. 3.
- 26 Cf. Zehnder (1944).
- 27 See Carré (1932), p. 262.
- 28 Ibid., p. 194; Adam, V, pp. 220f.
- 29 Krauss (1960), p. 137.
- 30 Fontenelle, *Œuvres* (1757), V, p. 43.
- 31 Ibid.
- 32 J.A.Comenius, *Opera didactica omnia* (1657), II, p. 802.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 J.Locke, *Extrait d'un livre Anglois* (1688).
- 35 On the French titles in Locke's library, see Lough (1953).
- 36 Locke (1978).
- 37 Dom R.Des Gabets, *Critique de la "Critique de la recherche de la vérité"* (1675).
- 38 On Des Gabets, cf. Armogathe (1979).
- 39 Bonno (1955).

## 7 A CENTURY OF CONTROVERSY

- 1 Anton (1799), Preface.
- 2 Cf. Aarsleff (1967, 1975), Amirova (1980), Carreter (1949), Droixhe (1978), Puppo (1957, 1971), Rosiello (1967).
- 3 Michael Hißmann, in de Brosses (1777), Preface. From the same translator we also have the German version of Condillac's *Essai (Versuch über den Ursprung der menschlichen Erkenntnisse)*. Trans. Master Michael Hißmann (Leipzig, 1780).
- 4 On England see Aarsleff (1967, 1975), on Italy see Puppo (1957, 1971).
- 5 A.Chavannes, *Anthropologie ou science générale de l'homme, pour servir d'introduction à l'étude de la Philosophie et des Langues, et de guide dans le plan d'éducation intellectuelle* (Lausanne, 1788).
- 6 On the relations between the problem of the origin of language and the natural sciences, see above all chapter 11 of the present work, "Language and evolutionary thinking."
- 7 Quemada (1967).
- 8 Chaudon (1767).
- 9 See pp. 199–206, "Louis-Sébastien Mercier and his *Néologie*—A Defence of the Republic."
- 10 See Ricken (1978), pp. 18ff.
- 11 Cf. Wandruszka (1954).
- 12 Rivarol, cited in Gauger (1973), p. 102.
- 13 Cf. David (1965).
- 14 See Warburton (1977).
- 15 Cf. David (1965).
- 16 See Droixhe (1978).
- 17 Cf. Vernier (1888).

18 Cf. Chevalier (1968).

## 8 FROM LOCKE TO CONDILLAC: THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SENSUALISTIC THEORY OF LANGUAGE

- 1 Marx/Engels, II, pp. 134–7. This is an excerpt from Karl Marx’s “The Holy Family” concerning the materialism of the French Enlightenment. Marx was basing his comments on M.Renouvier, *Manuel de philosophie moderne*, (Paris, 1842); cf. Bloch (1977), pp. 3–42. This conclusion does not, however, lessen Marx’s own estimation of the materialism of the Enlightenment as one of the sources of socialist ideas.
- 2 See the introduction to Locke by Delbourg-Dephis (1974).
- 3 J.Locke, Draft B of *An Essay concerning Human Understanding* (1931).
- 4 J.Locke, *Essay concerning Human Understanding* (1985), pp. 403f.
- 5 Ibid., §1.
- 6 Ibid., Chapter IX, §21.
- 7 Ibid., III, Chapter IX.
- 8 Ibid., III, Chapter X.
- 9 Ibid., I, Chapter III.
- 10 Ibid., III, Chapter IX.
- 11 A.Arnould and P.Nicole, *La Logique ou l’art de penser* (1662), I, Chapter XII.
- 12 Locke, *Essay*, III, Chapter III.
- 13 Ibid., III, Chapter X.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Coste in a footnote to Locke, *Essay*, III, Chapter X.
- 16 Locke, *Essay*, III, Chapter XI.
- 17 Ibid., IV, Chapter XXI.
- 18 Locke (1688).
- 19 See the recently published German translation by G.Klaus and the new critical edition by Auroux/Chouillet.
- 20 E.B.de Condillac, *Essai sur l’origine des connaissances humaines* (1746), Préface.
- 21 Condillac, *Essai*, II, i, Chapter 1.
- 22 Cf. Scharf (1975).
- 23 Condillac, *Essai*, II, i, Chapter 1ff.
- 24 Ibid., Préface.
- 25 Ibid., I, ii, Chapter 9, §78.
- 26 Ibid., I, iv, Chapter 2.
- 27 Ibid., II, i, Chapter 15.
- 28 Ibid., Chapter 9.
- 29 Ibid., II, ii, Chapter 3.
- 30 Ibid., I, ii, Chapter 9.
- 31 Ibid., II, i, Chapters 9–10.
- 32 Ibid., I, ii, Chapter 4.
- 33 Ibid., II, i, Chapters 3–4.
- 34 Ibid.
- 35 Ibid., I, ii, Chapter 4, 9–10.
- 36 Lenin, *Werke*, XIV, p. 27.
- 37 D.Diderot, *Œuvres complètes* (1875ff), XV, pp. 304f.
- 38 Ibid.
- 39 Cf. Rauter (1970).
- 40 Condillac, *Essai*, II, i, Chapter 1.
- 41 Voltaire, *Œuvres complètes* (1877–85), XXXIX, pp. 48f.

- 42 J.B.Mérian, *Parallèle de deux principes de psychologie* (1757).
- 43 Cf. Dewaule (1892), Le Roy (1937).
- 44 Cf. Storost (1972, 1980).
- 45 On the Ideologues see Chapter 14 of this volume.
- 46 J.O.de la Mettrie, *Œuvres philosophiques* (1751).
- 47 Condillac, *Essai*, I, iv, Chapter 2.
- 48 On the “Affaire de Prades” see the summarizing article by Spink (1971).
- 49 See Abbé J.-M.de Prades, *Apologie*, (1752) deuxième partie.
- 50 Cf. Spink (1971).
- 51 *Recueil des pièces* (1753), pp. 26f.
- 52 A.-M.Roche, *Traité de la nature de l’âme et de l’origine de ses connaissances* (1759), I, p. v.
- 53 Cited in Spink (1971), p. 163.
- 54 Cited in Rogister (1979), p. 325.
- 55 Cf. de Prades (1752), *Apologie*, deuxième partie.
- 56 The clerical *Journal de Trévoux* had, in its review of Condillac’s *Essai*, responded favorably to Condillac’s rejection of the possibility that matter could be capable of thought (May 1747, p. 800).
- 57 This phrase indicates that sensualistic ideas that stemmed from the Aristotelian-scholastic tradition were actually taught at contemporary universities.
- 58 See Abbé Paris, *La religion vengée des impiétés* (1754), pp. 11ff.
- 59 *Pièces nouvelles* (1754).
- 60 Roche (1759).
- 61 *Ibid.*, I, pp. 455–543.
- 62 *Ibid.*, I, p. 457.
- 63 Condillac, *Essai*, II, i, Chapter 1.
- 64 Roche (1759), I, pp. 500ff.
- 65 *Ibid.*, I, pp. 139ff.
- 66 *Ibid.*, I, pp. 506ff.
- 67 *Ibid.*, I, pp. 523ff.
- 68 *Ibid.*, I, p. 543.
- 69 *Ibid.*, I, pp. 246ff.
- 70 *Ibid.*, I, pp. 276ff.
- 71 *Ibid.*, II, pp. 216ff.
- 72 Abbé Paris (1754), pp. 11ff.
- 73 Voltaire, *Correspondance* (1953–65), XXX, p. 143.
- 74 *Ibid.*
- 75 L.-B.-R.Castel, *L’homme moral opposé à l’homme physique de M.R.\*\*\** (1756), p. 47.
- 76 With regard to the debate in the Berlin Academy, see Aarsleff (1974).
- 77 *Réunion des principaux moyens employés pour découvrir l’origine du langage, des idées, et des connoissances des hommes*. In Formey, *Anti-Emile* (1763), pp. 211–53.
- 78 *Ibid.*, p. 218.
- 79 J.-F.Laharpe, *Lycée ou cours de littérature ancienne et moderne* (1818), IV, p. 234.
- 80 *Journal de Trévoux*, May 1747, p. 800.
- 81 *Essai*, II, i, Chapter 1.
- 82 The fact that a work that was published anonymously in 1748 has only recently been identified as having been written by Condillac, namely his treatise *Les Monades* (see Condillac 1980), must caution us about judging the period between 1755 and 1775 too hastily.
- 83 Condillac, *Œuvres philosophiques* (1947–51), I, p. 385.

- 84 Ibid., pp. 385f.
- 85 See Guerci (1978), p. 55.
- 86 See Garat (1821), I, p. 219.
- 87 See Sgard (1982), pp. 67ff.
- 88 E.B.de Condillac, *Cours d'étude pour l'instruction du prince de Parme* (1775), Discours préliminaire.
- 89 Ibid., *Grammaire*, II, Chapter 8. See Guerci (1978), pp. 110ff.
- 90 Cf. Dal Pra (1942), Guerci (1978).
- 91 See the text by Andrea Mazza in Dal Pra (1942).
- 92 It is precisely in these chapters of Condillac's *Grammaire* that the form of address "monseigneur," which he used in addressing his princely charge, appears relatively more frequently than in the other parts of the work.
- 93 Condillac, *Grammaire*, I, Chapter 9: "Comment se fait l'analyse de la pensée dans les langues formées et perfectionnées."
- 94 Ibid., preface "Objet de cet ouvrage."
- 95 Cf. Duchet (1971, 1977).
- 96 Condillac, *Grammaire*, I, Chapter 1.
- 97 Ibid., Chapter 6.
- 98 Ibid.
- 99 Ibid., Chapter 4.
- 100 Ibid., Chapter 3.
- 101 Ibid., Chapter 5.
- 102 Ibid., Chapter 3.
- 103 Ibid.
- 104 Ibid., Chapter 4.
- 105 Condillac, *Grammaire*, I, Chapter 1. On Condillac's discussion of the arbitrariness of the sign, cf. Henschel (1977).
- 106 Condillac, *Essai*, II, i, Chapter 1.
- 107 Locke, *Essay*, III, Chapter 2, §8.
- 108 Condillac, *Grammaire*, I, Chapter 1.
- 109 Ibid., Chapter 2.
- 110 Cf. E.B.de Condillac, *Traité des animaux* (1755).
- 111 Condillac, *Grammaire*, I, end of Chapter 8.
- 112 When Condillac used the phrase, "Messieurs de Port-Royal," he meant Lancelot, Arnauld, and probably also Nicole as co-authors of the Port-Royal *Logic*.
- 113 See in the bibliography the works by Aarsleff, Auroux, Coseriu, Chevalier, Droixhe, Montréal-Wickert, Ricken, Rosiello.
- 114 Auroux (1982), Dominicy (1982), Joly (1982).
- 115 "Comment se fait l'analyse de la pensée dans les langues formées et perfectionnées," Condillac, *Grammaire*, I, Chapter 9.
- 116 Ibid., I, Chapter 8.
- 117 Ibid., Chapter 5.
- 118 Condillac very clearly expressed this distinction in the titles of his chapters. See Chapters I, II, VI, VII, VIII, IX, X.
- 119 Ibid., Chapter 6.
- 120 Auroux (1982).
- 121 Ibid.
- 122 Condillac, *Grammaire*, II, Chapter 5.
- 123 Ibid., end of Chapter 5.
- 124 Ibid, II, Chapter 25.
- 125 Ibid.
- 126 See Chevalier (1968), pp. 689ff.

## 9 GRAMMAR, PHILOSOPHY, ANTHROPOLOGY: THE PROBLEM OF WORD ORDER

- 1 On the subject of this chapter, see Ricken (1978). The present chapter is essentially a summary of this monograph. In German see also Ricken (1961, 1964, 1971, 1976). Scaglione (1972) locates the discussion of the problem of word order within a broader historical context.
- 2 L.Le Laboureur, *Avantages de la langue française sur la langue latine* (1669), p. 172.
- 3 See Ricken (1978), Chapter 1, and in Joly, ed. (1977).
- 4 Cf. Krauss (1960, 1978), Krauss/Kortum (1966a).
- 5 L.Lamy, *La Rhétorique, ou l'Art de parler* (1701), see Ricken (1978), Chapter II, 3.
- 6 *Ibid.*
- 7 J.La Bruyère, *Œuvres complètes* (1951), I, pp. 149f.; see Ricken (1978), pp. 66ff., Pizzorusso (1957, 1968a).
- 8 F.-L.de Fénelon, *Lettre à l'Académie, avec les versions primitives* (1970), cf. Pizzorusso (1959, 1968).
- 9 A.-M.de Ramsay, *Discours sur le poème épique* (1781).
- 10 E.S.de Gamaches, *Les Agréments du langage réduit à leçons principes* (1718); *Dissertations littéraires et philosophiques* (1755), cf. Pizzorusso (1968a).
- 11 J.-B.Du Bos, *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et sur la peinture* (1733), I, Section XXXIII.
- 12 C.G.Du Marsais, *Œuvres* (1797), III, pp. 379ff.
- 13 Condillac, *Essai* (1746), II, i, Chapters 1 and 12.
- 14 *Ibid.*, Chapter 12.
- 15 *Ibid.*
- 16 E.B.de Condillac, *De l'art d'écrire*, in *Œuvres philosophiques* (1947–51), I, pp. 517ff.
- 17 *Ibid.*, p. 520.
- 18 *Ibid.*, p. 578.
- 19 *Ibid.*, p. 579.
- 20 *Ibid.*, p. 580.
- 21 See D.Diderot, *Œuvres complètes* (1875), XV, p. 523.
- 22 On Diderot's *Lettre sur les sourds et muets*, see Chouillet (1973, 1977), Meyer in Diderot (1965), Venturi (1939).
- 23 Cf. Chouillet (1973).
- 24 Cf. Proust (1962).
- 25 On Diderot's linguistic and literary theory see Belaval (1950), Bernauer (1956), Cartwright (1969), Chouillet (1973), Coseriu (1972–5), Dieckmann (1957 and 1959), Droixhe (1978), Foucault (1966), France (1972), François (1959), Gilman (1946), Hunt (1938), Knowlson (1965), Lefebvre (1949), May (1957), Montréal-Wickert (1976), Mornet (1941), Mortier (1954 and 1961), Olbert (1951), Pommier (1951), Proust (1962, 1967), Roy (1966), Spitzer (1948), Steel (1941), Switten (1953), Uitti (1969), Varloot (1972), Venturi (1939), Wilson (1957), Winter (1972).
- 26 Diderot, *Œuvres complètes*, XVIII, p. 232.
- 27 See Meyer in Diderot (1965), pp. 12ff.
- 28 See J.le Rond d'Alembert, *Œuvres philosophiques et littéraires* (1797), II, p. 283.
- 29 Diderot (1965), pp. 41ff.
- 30 *Ibid.*, pp. 45f.
- 31 *Ibid.*, pp. 65f.
- 32 *Ibid.*, p. 43.

- 33 Ibid., pp. 61f.  
 34 Ibid., p. 70. See Ricken (1978), pp. 128ff.  
 35 *Encyclopédie*, VIII (1765), article “Inversion.”  
 36 Du Marsais, article “Construction.”  
 37 Ibid.  
 38 N.Beauzée, *Grammaire générale* (1767), II, p. 535.  
 39 Ibid., I, préface, pp. xf.  
 40 Ibid., II, pp. 467ff.  
 41 The division of languages into “analogue” and “transpositive,” which comes from the criterion of word order, is from Girard’s *Vrais principes de la langue française* (1747).  
 42 Beauzée, *Grammaire générale*, II, p. 530.  
 43 Ibid., p. 539.  
 44 Beauzée, article “Inversion,” in *Encyclopédie Méthodique* (1782), II, p. 363.  
 45 See Ch. Batteux *De la construction oratoire* (1763); *Traité de la construction oratoire* (1764); *Nouvel examen du préjugé sur l’inversion* (1767); *Traité de l’arrangement des mots* (1788).  
 46 Batteux (1763, 1764).  
 47 Batteux (1764), pp. 8f.  
 48 Ibid., pp. 331f.  
 49 Batteux (1767).  
 50 Ibid., pp. 25ff.  
 51 Ibid., p. 28.  
 52 Ibid., p. 29.  
 53 Ibid., p. 30.  
 54 J.G.Herder, *Sämtliche Werke* (1877–1913), I, pp. 189–94.  
 55 See J.Chr. Gottsched *Vollständigere und Neuerläuterte Deutsche Sprachkunst* (1757), pp. 400ff.  
 56 On the problem of word order in Rivarol’s *Discours sur l’universalité de la langue française*, see Ricken (1974, 1978).  
 57 Voltaire, *Œuvres complètes* (1877–85), XIX, pp. 284, 558.  
 58 A.Rivarol, *Discours sur l’universalité de la langue française* ed. Suran, (1930) pp. 253f.  
 59 J.-Ch. Th.de Laveaux *Cours théorique et pratique de langue et de littérature française* (1784), p. 15; see Ricken (1978), pp. 160ff.  
 60 Laveaux (1784), p. 64.  
 61 F.Algarotti, *Œuvres* (1772), III, p. 64.  
 62 D.J.Garat *Compte rendu de Rivarol, Discours sur l’universalité* (1785), pp. 21f.  
 63 In this, too, Garat follows Condillac’s theses concerning the interdependence of language and thought.  
 64 Garat (1785), pp. 26f.  
 65 Ibid., p. 32.  
 66 U.Domergue, *Journal de la Langue Française* (1785), pp. 886ff.  
 67 U.Domergue *Grammaire générale analytique* (1799), pp. 71ff.  
 68 On Domergue’s being called a “grammairien-patriote,” see *Journal de la Langue Française* 1791, II, 1.

## 10 THE ORIGIN OF LANGUAGE AND THE HISTORICAL VIEW OF HUMANITY

- 1 Cf. Kuehner (1944).  
 2 Borst (1957–63).  
 3 See Aarsleff (1974), Megill (1974).

- 4 B.Lamy, *De l'art de parler* (1676), pp. 7ff.
- 5 Ibid., pp. 266ff.
- 6 Ibid., p. 267.
- 7 Especially unambiguous in this respect is the title of this chapter, which was added later: "L'on refute la Fable qui vient d'être proposée, et l'on déclare qu'elle [sic!] est la véritable origine des Langues" (ibid., p. 266).
- 8 It would otherwise be impossible to explain why the chapter title cited in the previous note would have appeared at the very end of the work, but the clarifying portrayal of the origin of language at the beginning, thus separating the two chapters by more than 250 pages.
- 9 Richard Simon, *Histoire critique du Vieux Testament* (1685), pp. 84ff.
- 10 Ibid., p. 85.
- 11 Ibid., p. 86.
- 12 Ibid., p. 87.
- 13 Ibid., pp. 484f.
- 14 I am citing Pufendorf's work from the second edition of the French translation, which appeared in 1712.
- 15 S.Pufendorf, *Le droit de la nature et des gens* (1712), I, pp. 426f.
- 16 Ibid., p. 428.
- 17 See Droixhe (1978), pp. 162ff.
- 18 Ibid., pp. 175, 237ff.
- 19 Locke, *Essay* (1985), III, Chapter I.
- 20 C.C.Du Marsais, *Œuvres* (1797), III, pp. 379ff.
- 21 Maupertuis, in Porset (1970a).
- 22 Turgot, in Porset (1970a), cf. Droixhe (1978).
- 23 Rousseau, in Porset (ed.) (1970).
- 24 A.Smith, in Porset (1970).
- 25 Lord Monboddo, *Of the Origin and Progress of Language* (1773–92) even has six volumes; see, on Monboddo, Verri (1975).
- 26 Condillac, *Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines* (1746); *Traité des animaux* (1755); cf. Salvucci (1957, 1961).
- 27 Condillac, *Essai*, I, ii, Chapter 4ff.
- 28 Ibid.; a similar account is given in Condillac's *Traité des animaux*.
- 29 Condillac, *Essai*, II, i, Chapters 4–8.
- 30 My comments on Rousseau are based on R.Bach (1976, 1977, 1978).
- 31 J.-J.Rousseau, *Œuvres complètes* (1966–9), III, p. 364.
- 32 Rousseau's central text on the problem of the origin of language with respect to social theory is his essay on the origin of inequality, in *Œuvres complètes* III, pp. 109–236.
- 33 Ibid., III, pp. 166ff.
- 34 Ibid., III, p. 164.
- 35 Ibid., III, pp. 132, 164, 193.
- 36 Ibid., III, p. 132.
- 37 Ibid., III, p. 164.
- 38 Ibid., III, p. 151.
- 39 Ibid., III, p. 168.
- 40 Ibid., III, p. 164.
- 41 Ibid.
- 42 Ibid., III, p. 510.
- 43 Cf. Aarsleff (1974), Bahner (1978b), Hartung (1977), Megill (1974).
- 44 See on this Aarsleff (1974).
- 45 Mendelssohn, *Sendschreiben an den Herrn Magister Lessing*, in M. Mendelssohn, *Schriften zur Psychologie, Aesthetik, Apologetik* (1880), pp. 323–48. This "letter" is a kind of appendix to Mendelssohn's translation of Rousseau's treatise on the

- origin of inequality. See Mendelssohn's comment that he had spoken "very often" with Lessing about the origin of language (p. 343).
- 46 Ibid., p. 329.
- 47 J.-H.-S. Formey, *Réunion des principaux moyens employés pour découvrir l'origine du langage, des idées, et des connaissances des hommes*, (1763), pp. 211–53.
- 48 N. Beauzée, *Grammaire générale* (1767), I, préface.
- 49 See, on Herder's prize-essay, Aarsleff (1974), Bahner (1978b), Hartung (1977), Megill (1974).
- 50 J.G. Herder, *Sämtliche Werke* (1877–1913), II, pp. 68f.; IV, pp. 368.
- 51 See Salmon (1968–9).
- 52 J.G. Herder, *Über den Ursprung der Sprache* (1959), and *Werke*, V, p. 28.
- 53 Herder in Monboddo (1784), I, Preface, p. 5.
- 54 Ibid., pp. 10f.
- 55 Ibid., p. 11.
- 56 Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, in *Werke*, XIII, p. 368.
- 57 J.G. Herder, *Kalligone* (1955), p. 269.
- 58 On the condemnation of the sensualistic thesis of the origin of language from the perspective of the Restoration, see Chapter 14 in this volume.

## 11 LANGUAGE AND EVOLUTIONARY THINKING

- 1 See Bärenbach (1877), Stolpe (1964), Salmon (1968–9), Roger (1971), Verri (1975).
- 2 M. de Polignac, *L'Anti-Lucrèce, poème sur la religion naturelle* (1780).
- 3 Cf. Hervé (1908).
- 4 Cf. Verri (1975).
- 5 Cf. Bärenbach (1877).
- 6 Stolpe (1964).
- 7 Mounin, cited in Koerner (1973), p. 174.
- 8 Cf. Dagen (1977).
- 9 Cf. Roger (1971).
- 10 See Krauss (1978), pp. 136ff.; see also Bonnet (1779–83), G.-H. Bougeant *Amusement philosophique sur le langage des bêtes* (1739, ed. 1954), Hennings (1774), Leroy, Ch.-G., *Lettres philosophiques sur l'intelligence et la perfectibilité des animaux* (1802), Meier, *Versuch eines neuen Lehrgebäudes von den Seelen der Tiere* (1750), Montanari, Ch.-L., *Trattenimento metafisico* (1763); Claparède (1909), Duchet (1971, 1977), Formigari (1972), Hastings (1936).
- 11 See Chaudon (1767).
- 12 Linné, *Systema Naturae*, cf. Duchet (1971, 1977).
- 13 Polignac (1780).
- 14 See Duchet (1971, 1977), pp. 181ff.
- 15 E.B. de Condillac, *Traité des animaux*, in *Œuvres philosophiques* (1947–51), I, pp. 339–79.
- 16 Ibid., pp. 360ff.
- 17 Ch. Bonnet, *Œuvres d'histoire naturelle et de philosophie* (1779–83), IX, pp. 436f.
- 18 Ibid., XV, p. 52.
- 19 Bonnet, *Œuvres* (1779–83), XV, pp. 163f.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 A. von Haller, *Tagebuch seiner Beobachtungen über Schriftsteller und sich selbst* (1787), II, p. 193.

- 22 Haller, *Anfangsgründe der Physiologie des menschlichen Körpers* (1759–76), V, pp. 1089f.
- 23 P.-L.de Maupertuis, *Œuvres* (1768), II, p. 243.
- 24 *Ibid.*, pp. 242ff.
- 25 D.Diderot, *Œuvres complètes* (1969), II, p. 769.
- 26 Cf. Ludovico (1979).
- 27 E.B.de Condillac, *Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines* (1746) and *Traité des animaux* (1755).
- 28 Condillac employed this dialectical approach in his discussion of the origin of language in the two aforementioned works.
- 29 J.G.Hamann, *Schriften* (1821–42), IV, p. 14.
- 30 J.G.Herder, *Kalligone* (1955), p. 86.
- 31 J.-B.de Lamarck, *Philosophie zoologique* (1907).
- 32 A.Schleicher, *Über die Bedeutung der Sprache für die Naturgeschichte des Menschen* (1865), pp. 3ff.
- 33 C.Darwin, *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex* (1871), p. 95.
- 34 E.Darwin, *Zoonomia: or the Laws of Organic Life* (1784), pp. 590f.
- 35 E.Haeckel, *Natürliche Schöpfungsgeschichte* (1879), pp. 82f.
- 36 O.Schmidt (1876), pp. 2ff.
- 37 *Ibid.*, p. 3.
- 38 *Ibid.*, pp. 3f.

## 12 THE “ABUSE OF WORDS”

- 1 U.Domergue, *Journal de la Langue Française*, cinq novembre 1791, p. 122.
- 2 C.A.Helvétius, *De l'esprit*, Discours premier, Chapter 4, in *Œuvres* (1781).
- 3 R.Descartes, *Discours de la méthode* (1967), p. 69.
- 4 See Ricken (1961a), pp. 103ff.
- 5 B.de Fontenelle, “Préface de l'histoire de l'Académie des Sciences”, *Œuvres* (1757–61), X, p. 2.
- 6 Ch. de Brosses, *Traité de la formation mécanique des langues et des principes physiques de l'étymologie* (1765), I, p. 41.
- 7 R.Descartes, *Œuvres complètes* (1897–1908), IX, p. 81.
- 8 *Ibid.*, I, p. 82.
- 9 *Ibid.*, IX, p. 180.
- 10 *Ibid.*, IX, p. 205.
- 11 A.Arnault and B.Nicole, *La Logique ou l'art de penser. [La Logique de Port-Royal]* (1662), Première partie, Chapter 4.
- 12 *Ibid.*, Chapters 12–14.
- 13 P.-S.Régis, *Système de philosophie, contenant ladogique, la métaphysique, la physique et la morale* (1760), pp. 14f.
- 14 Arnault/Nicole, Première partie, Chapter 14.
- 15 *Ibid.*
- 16 N.Andry de Boisregard, *Réflexions sur l'usage présent de la langue françoise* (1689), p. 31.
- 17 F.Bacon, *Neues Organon* (1870), pp. 84ff.
- 18 T.Hobbes, *Vom Menschen. Vom Bürger* (1967), pp. 148f.
- 19 S.Pufendorf, *Le droit de la nature et des gens* (1712), I, Livre quatrième, Chapter 1.
- 20 B.Spinoza, *Abhandlung über die Verbesserung des Verstandes* (1922); see Robinet (1978), pp. 141ff.
- 21 J.Locke, *Essay*, (1985), III, Chapter 10.
- 22 *Ibid.*, I, Chapter 3, §24.

- 23 J.Meslier, *Œuvres complètes* (1970–2), II, pp. 41ff.  
 24 Ibid.  
 25 J.-B.Du Bos, *Histoire critique de l'établissement de la monarchie française dans les Gaules* (1742), I, pp. 3, 54f., 103f., 190, 281f.; II, 121f., 255f., 299f.; III, 26f., 137f.; IV, 102f., 140f., 145f., 372f.  
 26 Ch.-L.de Montesquieu, *Œuvres complètes* (1951) (Pléiade), II, livre XII, Chapter 8, p. 438.  
 27 Ibid., II, livre XI, Chapter 2, p. 324.  
 28 Warburton (1977), pp. 160f.  
 29 *Bibliothèque Universelle des Romans*, juin 1782, p. 161.  
 30 C.C.Duclos, *Œuvres* (1797), VIII, pp. 8f.  
 31 Condillac, *Essai*, II, i, Chapter 11.  
 32 D.Diderot, *De l'interprétation de la nature*, *Œuvres complètes* (1875), II, p. 18.  
 33 D.Diderot, *Encyclopédie*, II, article "bassesse."  
 34 Ibid., VIII, article "honnête."  
 35 Diderot, *Œuvres* (1875), VII, p. 370; see Chouillet (1977), p. 107.  
 36 Diderot, *Œuvres* (1875), XVIII, p. 232.  
 37 Helvétius, *De l'esprit*, Discours I, Chapter 4.  
 38 Ibid.  
 39 Ibid.  
 40 G.B.de Mably, *Œuvres complètes* (1791), XVI, p. 14.  
 41 Voltaire, *Œuvres complètes* (1877–85), XVII, pp. 48–50.  
 42 Krauss, (1966b), pp. 58–64.  
 43 Ch. Palissot de Montenois, *Œuvres* (1788), II, pp. 121ff.  
 44 J.-E.-M.Portalis, *De l'usage et de l'abus de l'esprit philosophique durant le XVIIIe siècle* (1834), I, pp. 56ff.  
 45 J.-J.Rousseau, *Œuvres complètes* (1966–9), IV, p. 524.  
 46 Ibid., III, p. 558.  
 47 Ibid.; see also Bach (1978).  
 48 Cited in Barny (1978), p. 106:

*L'abus des mots* a toujours été un des principaux moyens qu'on a employés pour asservir les peuples...Gardons-nous donc *citoyens*, de nous laisser *abuser par les mots*; quand le pouvoir exécutif est venu à bout de nous en imposer sur le sens de certaines expressions, il paraît faire une *chose*, et il en fait une autre; et peu à peu il nous chargeait de chaînes en nous parlant de *liberté*.

*Le mot aristocrate* n'a pas moins contribué à la révolution que la cocarde. Sa signification est aujourd'hui très étendue; il s'applique à tous ceux qui vivent *d'abus*, qui regrettent les *abus*, ou qui veulent créer de nouveaux *abus*. Les *aristocrates* ont cherché à nous persuader que ce mot était devenu insignifiant: nous n'avons pas donné dans le piège; et les lumières gagnent de proche en proche dans les retraites de l'aristocratie, ses satellites ont senti qu'ils étaient perdus, s'ils ne trouvaient pas un mot dont le *pouvoir magique* détruisît la *puissance du mot aristocrate*.

Nous ignorons s'il leur en a coûté beaucoup d'efforts; mais nous savons que notre *mot de ralliement* est contrebalancé aujourd'hui par celui *d'incendiaire*, et qu'à l'aide de certaines menaces dont on l'a accompagné, de certaines vexations qui le suivent de près, il glace d'effroi d'excellents citoyens.

- 49 Cited in Barny (1978), p. 105:

Il faut, pour faire une bonne loi nouvelle, abandonner non seulement les *anciens mots*, mais les *anciennes idées* qu'on y attachait.

C'est la municipalité et non pas la commune que l'assemblée voyait devant elle. Il ne faut pas mettre de *confusion dans les mots* pour un *peuple qui naît à la liberté*; elle entraînerait bientôt celle des *choses*; et la *commune*, c'est-à-dire

les habitants collectivement pris, s'accoutumeraient peut-être à voir la *municipalité* affecter tous les droits, s'emparer de tous les pouvoirs qui n'appartiennent qu' à eux.

50 Cited in Barny (1978), p. 110:

J'observe qu'un des moyens familièrement employés dans cette assemblée pour *égaler nos idées* c'est de faire toujours usage *d'expressions nouvelles*: on dit *premier fonctionnaire public* au lieu de *Roi*, *dynastie* au lieu de *maison régnante*: vous avez emprunté le langage des Chinois.

51 Cited in Barny (1978), p. 105:

[L]es hommes se mènent par les mots, les mots doivent donc exprimer précisément ce que l'on veut qu'ils signifient.... Si le *faux emploi du mot peuple* a été pour les méchants un prétexte et un moyen, il a été une excuse pour les simples et les crédules. Il serait bien temps que l'Assemblée Nationale fit cesser cette *cause de troubles*, et l'on devrait *rappeler très sévèrement à l'ordre* quiconque emploierait le *mot peuple dans une autre signification que celle qu'il doit avoir*.

52 Cited in Barny (1978), p. 107:

Il est incroyable combien les orateurs de l'Assemblée Nationale ont abusé, et abusent encore de sa jeunesse de notions et d'opinions: ils l'ont persuadée, selon les circonstances, tantôt qu'elle était *corps constitué*, tantôt *corps constituant*, tantôt *convention nationale*, et ainsi, par un simple choix de dénomination, ils lui ont fait confondre tous les pouvoirs, oublier son origine, et commettre le crime de lèse-majesté, à la fois envers son *vrai souverain le Roi*, et envers son *souverain factice le Peuple*.

53 A. Morellet, *Mélanges de littérature et de philosophie du XVIIIe siècle* (1818), III, pp. 86ff.

54 Ibid., p. 89.

55 Ibid., p. 86.

56 F.N. Babeuf, *Le tribun du peuple* (1969), p. 291; cf. Bahner (1962).

### 13 LANGUAGE AND KNOWLEDGE: THEORETICAL SOURCES OF THE "LINGUISTIC RELATIVITY" OF COGNITION

1 This chapter was written with the assistance of Gerda Haßler and is based on her *Sprachtheorien der Aufklärung zur Rolle der Sprache im Erkenntnisprozeß*, Berlin 1984. On the issue of the degree to which the language theories of the Enlightenment were a source of the thesis concerning the "world-view" of language or of the linguistic relativity of thought, see Christmann (1967 and 1981), Politzer (1963b), Haßler (1984). On the role that individual authors during the Enlightenment played in the history of linguistic relativism, see Heintz (1969), Politzer (1963a), Haßler (1976 and 1984), Penn (1972), Weimann (1965).

2 See, for example, B. Whorf (1962), Weisgerber (1950–9), Gipper (1972).

3 One finds a discussion of the different varieties of relativism in Albrecht (1974a). See also Albrecht (1975b), pp. 222–99, Kolsanskij (1965), pp. 169–87, Neubert (1962a, b), Panfilov (1974), Panfilov (1975, pp. 3–12), Pinxten (1976), Rossi-Landi (1973), Vasil'ev (1974).

4 See Weisgerber (1964, 1950–9, 1967).

5 Whorf (1962), p. 58.

6 Ibid.

7 See Aarsleff (1977), and the critical responses by Gipper (1981), Oesterreicher (1981).

8 See, for example, the three works with the title "Le génie de la langue française"

- by Jean d'Aisy (1685), Louis Du-Truc (1668) and Jean Menudier (1681). On the development of the concept "génie de la langue," see Christmann (1977a).
- 9 See A.Arnould and P.Nicole, *La Logique ou l'art de penser* (1662), Première partie, Chapter 1.
  - 10 F.Bacon, *Instauratio Magna* (1659), pp. 53f.
  - 11 F.Bacon, *De dignitate et augmentis scientiarum* (1654), p. 276.
  - 12 See Chapter 1 above.
  - 13 G.Vico, *De nostri temporis studiorum ratione* (1947), pp. 70–2.
  - 14 G.W.Leibniz, *Unorgreifliche Gedanken betreffend die Ausübung und Verbesserung der deutschen Sprache* (c. 1697), §1, in G.W.Leibniz, *Deutsche Schriften* (1916), p. 25.
  - 15 See G.W.Leibniz, *Nouveaux essais sur l'entendement humain* (1966), pp. 55–72.
  - 16 See G.W.Leibniz, *Monadologie* (1962). On the place of the *Monadologie* in Leibniz's theory of language, see Heinekamp (1976), Verburg (1976).
  - 17 Leibniz's interest in documenting the vocabulary and the grammars of natural languages becomes especially evident in his later works.
  - 18 See Locke, *Essay* (1985), II, Chapter 22.
  - 19 *Ibid.*, III, Chapter 5.
  - 20 *Ibid.*, III, Chapter 6.
  - 21 Léry, *Histoire d'un voyage fait en la terre du Brésil, autrement dite Amérique* (1558), p. 342, cited in Christmann (1967).
  - 22 Locke, *Essay* (1985), II, Chapter 16.
  - 23 *Ibid.*, II, Chapter 25.
  - 24 *Ibid.*, III, Chapter 9.
  - 25 See G.Berkeley, *A Treatise concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*, in *Works* (1871), I, pp. 144, 153.
  - 26 See G.Berkeley, *Essay towards a New Theory of Vision*, in *Works* (1871), I, p. 64; *A Treatise concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*, in *Works* (1871), I, p. 152.
  - 27 G.Berkeley, *Essay towards a New Theory of Vision*, in *Works* (1871), I, p. 90.
  - 28 G.Berkeley, *A Treatise concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*, I, pp. 144, 149.
  - 29 *Ibid.*, pp. 182f.; see Rauter (1970), p. 51; on Berkeley's language theory, see also Mugnai (1979).
  - 30 E.B.de Condillac, *Essai* (1746), II, i, Chapter 15.
  - 31 See E.B.de Condillac, *La Logique*, in *Œuvres philosophiques* (1947–51), II, p. 401; *Langue des calculs*, *ibid.*, p. 419.
  - 32 E.B.de Condillac, *Essai* (1746), I, ii, Chapter 9.
  - 33 See Condillac, *La Logique*, in *Œuvres philosophiques*, II, p. 400; *Cours d'étude*, *ibid.*, I, p. 404.
  - 34 Condillac, *Essai* (1746), II, i, Chapter 15.
  - 35 See Ch. de Brosses, *Traité de formation mécanique des langues et des principes physiques de l'etymologie* (1765), I, 67–72.
  - 36 See Condillac, *Essai* (1746), II, i, Chapter 15.
  - 37 See E.B.de Condillac, *Grammaire*, Première partie, Chapter 2.
  - 38 *Ibid.*
  - 39 E.B.de Condillac, *Cours d'histoire*, in *Œuvres philosophiques*, II, p. 38.
  - 40 *Ibid.*, II, p. 90.
  - 41 *Ibid.*
  - 42 Condillac underscored the significance of the mother tongue in his induction speech for the Académie française. See *Œuvres philosophiques*, I, pp. 389ff.
  - 43 D.Diderot, *Œuvres* (1875), XV, p. 523.
  - 44 P.-L.de Maupertuis, *Réflexions philosophiques sur l'origine des langues et la signification des mots* (1970), p. 27.

- 45 Ibid., p. 39.
- 46 Ibid., pp. 27, 29.
- 47 Ibid., p. 47.
- 48 See P.-L.de Maupertuis, *Lettre sur les progrès des sciences*, in *Œuvres* (1752), p. 339.
- 49 See A.-R.-J.Turgot, *Remarques critiques sur les Réflexions philosophiques de M.de Maupertuis*, in *Œuvres* (1913), I, p. 158.
- 50 Ibid., pp. 139 and 170.
- 51 E.B.de Condillac, "Lettre à Maupertuis (25 juin 1752)," in *Œuvres philosophiques*, II, pp. 535–8.
- 52 See J.D.Michaelis, *Dissertation sur l'influence réciproque du langage sur les opinions, et des opinions sur le langage* (1760), p. 15.
- 53 Ibid., p. 38.
- 54 Ibid., pp. 29f.
- 55 Ibid., p. 34.
- 56 Ibid., pp. 50ff.
- 57 Ibid., p. 71.
- 58 Ibid., p. 75.
- 59 Ibid., p. 81.
- 60 Michaelis (1760).
- 61 J.D.Michaelis, *De l'influence des opinions sur le langage et du langage sur les opinions* (1762).
- 62 In 1769 the first edition of the English translation appeared, and in 1771 the second edition was published.
- 63 See Christmann (1967), pp. 463f.
- 64 Michaelis (1760), p. 78.
- 65 See Megill (1974), p. 365. On the further development of the discussion of language at the Prussian Academy and in Germany see Aarsleff (1974), Formigari (1977), Hartung (1977).
- 66 See J.G.Herder (1978), II, pp. 11–12.
- 67 Ibid., II, p. 10.
- 68 J.G.Herder, *Werke* (1957), II, pp. 73f.
- 69 Herder (1978), II, p. 52.
- 70 J.H.Lambert, *Neues Organon* (1764), Preface.
- 71 Ibid., I, p. 473.
- 72 Ibid., II, p. 5.
- 73 Ibid., II, pp. 191f.
- 74 Ibid., II, p. 192.
- 75 Already in Muratori's *Della perfetta poesia italiana* (1706) the stylistic and rhetorical orientation of the "questione della lingua," which mainly concerned the relationship between Tuscan and the other dialects to written language, had been enhanced by an epistemological and social interest in language. In his *Saggio sopra la necessità di scrivere nella propria lingua* (1750), Algarotti interpreted Condillac's linguistic theory with an apologetic aim: if language and thought belong so closely together, he argued, then that means that one would have to give up one's unique essence if one were to write in a foreign language. Beccaria saw the limits imposed on the cognitive possibilities of a linguistic community within the vocabulary of the respective language (*Frammento sullo stile* (1764), p. 171: "I limiti delle sue osservazioni si trovano nel suo vocabulario"). Finally, Cesarotti's *Saggio sopra la lingua italiana* (1785) summarized the basic concepts of the Italian language debate and emphasized, in his very subtle explanation of the relationship between language and thought, the developmental aspect. At the end of the eighteenth century the thesis about the relativity of thought due to language was for Galeani Napione (*Dell'uso e*

- dei pregi della lingua italiana*, 1791) one of the most important arguments for the demand for a unified national language. On the thesis about the world-view in Italian discussions of language see Christmann (1967). On the “questione della lingua” and on eighteenth-century Italian theories of language see Migliorini (1949), Puppo (1957), Vitale (1966).
- 76 See, e.g., Cesarotti (1785), p. 126.
- 77 On the discussion in England see Aarsleff (1967), Formigari (1970).
- 78 Hartley (1749), pp. 282, 305f.
- 79 See especially Harris, *Hermes, or A Philosophical Inquiry Concerning Universal Grammar* (1771). Joly pointed out the importance of Harris for Humboldt’s language theory in the introduction to F.Thurot, *Tableau des progrès de la science grammaticale* (1970), pp. 8f.
- 80 Harris (1771), pp. 407f.
- 81 *Ibid.*, pp. 411ff.
- 82 W.von Humboldt, *Briefwechsel zwischen Friedrich Schiller und Wilhelm von Humboldt* (1962), I, p. 228.
- 83 See the passages from letters cited by Aarsleff, in Sebeok (1975a), pp. 432f.

#### 14 THE FRENCH ENLIGHTENMENT AND ITS AFTERMATH: LINGUISTIC THEORY AND LANGUAGE DEBATES FROM THE ENLIGHTENMENT TO THE RESTORATION

- 1 The volumes of Ferdinand Brunot’s *Histoire de la Langue Française* (IX–XI) that are devoted to the French language during the Revolution also contain many excerpts from pertinent contemporary texts. The studies by Acton (1961), Balibar (1974), Barny (1978), Baum (1975), and Certeau/Julia/Revel (1975), offer evidence of a renewed interest in linguistic consciousness during the years of the Revolution. Cf. Bochmann (1981).
- 2 Cf. Certeau/Julia/Revel (1965), Balibar/Laporte (1974).
- 3 Cf. Ricken (1977).
- 4 Robespierre, *Œuvres* (1950), VIII, p. 206; cf. Ricken (1974, “Zur Sprachdiskussion während der französischen Revolution”).
- 5 New research on Domergue has been conducted by Busse (1981). The most comprehensive publication on Domergue is by Ballin (1885), who was Domergue’s secretary in the “Académie grammaticale,” which was founded in 1807. Through the offices of Ballin, manuscripts and documents from Domergue’s estate went to Rouen, where they are now located in the Bibliothèque Municipale. One can find there the folder for the meetings of the “Académie grammaticale,” the statute of the academy, and Urbain Domergue’s will, which he wrote in a phonetic script that he had devised himself. I was informed of the existence of these materials by Gérard Duverdier, the librarian at the Collège de France. The Municipalité of Aubagne, Domergue’s place of birth, is interested in the further study of his life and works. (The “adjoint au maire honoraire” of Aubagne, Lucien Grimaud, would appreciate any further information in this regard.) Most of the comments about Domergue in later collections and in general biographies are very incomplete and partially incorrect, for example as concerns his characterization as a “puriste.”
- 6 U.Domergue, *Grammaire française simplifiée* (1778, 1782).
- 7 U.Domergue, *Décisions révisées du journal de la langue française* (1791); *Grammaire générale analytique* (1799); *Solutions grammaticales* (1808).
- 8 U.Domergue, *Journal de la Langue Française* (1786).
- 9 *Journal de la Langue Française* (1791), II, p. 1.
- 10 *Dictionnaire de l’Académie Française* (1762), article on “néologie.”

11 *Journal de la Langue Française* (1787), II, p. 204:

[I]l est permis à qui que ce soit d'émettre des mots nouveaux, donner des acceptions nouvelles aux mots anciens, en se conformant aux règles de la néologie, qu'il ne faut pas confondre avec le néologisme. La néologie est aux idiomes ce que la morale est aux moeurs; elle les fonde et les règle. Le néologisme est à un écrit ce que le vice est au coeur, il le souille."

## 12 Domergue (1799), pp. 7f.:

[N]e profanons pas le nom de grammairien en le prostituant aux grammatistes, qui, ne s'élevant jamais aux principes sur lesquels repose la science, borné à la routine, vient bégayer quelques règles enfantines sur le matériel des mots...ne le donnons pas non plus au puriste. Le puriste n'a nul sentiment de la science; il est de glace aux beautés réelles, et tout de feu, pour les fautes apparentes. Le purisme est la superstition de la grammaire; le purisme est le secret ennemi de la pureté.

13 *Journal de la Langue Française* (1791–2).

14 There are several lists and receipts of the names of subscribers attached to the volumes of the *Journal de la Langue Française* (1791–2) in the Bibliothèque Nationale Paris and in the Bibliothèque Municipale Rouen.

15 The *Journal de la Langue Française* of 5 November 1791 reproduces the complete text of this speech held on 31 October.

## 16 Messieurs,

Un dictionnaire vraiment philosophique, qui atteigne notre langue usuelle dans toutes ses parties, manque à notre littérature, à nos besoins journaliers, à notre nouvelle existence politique. Vainement la nation s'est flattée, pendant plus d'un siècle, de voir élever par l'académie française le grand monument pour lequel elle a été instituée; toujours trompée dans sa juste espérance, elle s'est vue réduite à se livrer aux hérésies académiques, comme le vulgaire embrasse des religions fausses, parce que la véritable ne s'est pas révélée à ses yeux.

Le jour de la liberté à lui; toutes les erreurs vont s'évanouir, comme les ombres disparaissent devant l'astre qui nous éclaire. Mais des diverses erreurs qui font le malheur de l'homme, la plus funeste peut-être est *l'abus des mots, qui nous trompe sur les choses. Persuadé que sans une langue bien faite il n'est point d'idées saines et que sans idées saines il n'est point de bonheur*, j'ai conçu le projet de vous rassembler, pour travailler tous de concert au perfectionnement de notre idiome. La France a reçu de l'Amérique l'exemple de la régénération des lois; donnons à toutes les nations l'exemple de la régénération des langues.

Pour bien asseoir le monument national que nous voulons élever, nous devons d'abord nous assurer des bases. La lexique [sic], qui est la science des dictionnaires nous le fait connaître. Elle exige impérieusement qu'un dictionnaire vraiment philosophique présente, à chaque mot, une classification juste, une étymologie saine, une prosodie exacte, une étymologie lumineuse, une définition logique, des exemples propres aux différentes acceptions; qu'il ouvre les trésors d'une sage néologie, qu'il dévoile les secrets de la dialectique, de la poésie, de l'éloquence; en un mot qu'il ne laisse rien à désirer de tout ce qui peut contribuer à la perfection de la langue, à l'instruction et au plaisir du lecteur.

Mais comme il est important de ne rien laisser en arrière, comme le succès dépend du soin qu'on prendra de scruter d'un oeil philosophique toutes les parties, pour composer un tout digne des lumières de notre âge, je crois qu'il est

nécessaire de former d'abord un comité de lexicque, d'où, comme d'un tronc fécond, sortiront tous les autres comités.

Le comité de lexicque sera composé d'un nombre indéfini de membres. Tous ceux qui croient pouvoir apporter quelques lumières dans cette partie fondamentale de l'édifice, sont invités à se faire inscrire. Une vaine modestie ne doit point arrêter les amateurs de la langue française. Le désir d'être utile est la seule considération qui doit les déterminer.

Le comité de lexicque présentera son travail, à la prochaine assemblée; chaque article sera discuté, et enfin arrêté, à la pluralité des voix. Dès ce moment, nous saurons combien de comités sont nécessaires pour ordonner et préparer les travaux.

S'il m'est permis d'anticiper sur le plan qui vous sera soumis, je crois qu'il y aura sept comités:

Le comité d'étymologie,

Le comité de prononciation et d'orthographe,

Celui de définition, de signification et d'exemples,

Celui de syntaxe,

Le comité de logique et de belles-lettres,

Le comité de néologie,

Le comité de révision....

17 *Journal de la Langue Française*.

18 See the protocols in the following issues of the *Journal de la Langue Française*.

19 *Ibid.*, protocol of the meeting of 7 November, published in the *Journal de la Langue Française* of 12 November 1791.

20 *Journal de la Langue Française* of 19 November 1791.

21 *Ibid.*, March 1792.

22 *Ibid.*

23 Domergue, *Projet d'adresse sur la langue*, in *Convention Nationale, Procès-verbaux du Comité d'Instruction Publique*, III, pp. 444–7: “La République, une et indivisible dans son territoire, dans son système politique, doit être une et indivisible dans son langage.” This text was at that time sent from the “Comité de Salut Public” to the “Comité d'Instruction Publique” and from there passed on to Grégoire, the specialist of the convention on questions about the “langue nationale” and of its predominance over local dialects. I am again grateful to Gérard Duverdière, librarian at the Collège de France, to whom I owe this information.

24 Surely he was thinking of his own *Grammaire française simplifiée élémentaire* (4th edn 1791).

25 Domergue, *Projet d'adresse sur la langue*, in *Convention Nationale, Procès-verbaux du Comité d'Instruction Publique*, III, pp. 444–7:

La connaissance de la vraie signification des mots donne de la rectitude à l'esprit, et prévient toutes les erreurs qui naissent du langage.

Erreurs logiques, erreurs grammaticales, erreurs politiques, danger à chaque page, à chaque mot, tels sont tous nos lexicques depuis le Richelet portatif jusqu'au grand dictionnaire des quarante immortels dont l'heureuse mort a délivré la langue des chaînes où elle languissait esclave, pauvre, sans honneur et sans courage. Faisons un dictionnaire républicain, avoué par la raison, par le goût, par la saine politique, où chaque mot peignant une idée juste, l'oeil du Français ne soit plus blessé en lisant ces définitions académiques: Le roi est le souverain, le citoyen est l'habitant d'une ville; marquis, baron, comte, duc, prince, sont des termes de dignités. Un roi est un usurpateur, un tyran, l'oppresser de la liberté publique. Un citoyen est un membre de la cité, du souverain. Marquis, baron, comte, duc, prince, sont des expressions jadis inventées par l'orgueil, adoptées par la bassesse, maintenant effacées par le niveau de l'égalité et reléguées sur la scène pour devenir un objet de dérision ou d'horreur.

- 26 Ibid.
- 27 *Procès-verbaux du Comité d'Instruction Publique*, III, pp. 569ff.
- 28 Morellet (1796).
- 29 See the statutes in the Bibliothèque Municipale Rouen, Fonds Domergue.
- 30 On Mercier's *Néologie* see the study by Mormile (1973), and, more generally on the neology discussion, Krauss (1970), Armogathe (1973), Ricken (1977). A selection of recent literature on Mercier is offered in the anthologies edited by Hofer (1977, 1978).
- 31 The largest part of Mercier's literary remains, including his extensive file of lexical index-cards, has been available in the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, Paris, for several years.
- 32 See Quemada (1967), pp. 529f.; Mormile (1973), p. 256.
- 33 The twelve volumes of *Le Tableau de Paris* (1782–8), have 1,049 chapters; *Le Nouveau Paris* (1798), which comprises six volumes, has 271 chapters.
- 34 See, for example, "Capitaliste," IV, 216; "Citoyen actif," III, 239; "Contre-révolution," III, 245; "Dédicifier," III, 211; "Honnêtes gens," III, 264; "Lanterner," IV, 73; "Monarchien," II, 197; "Nation," III, 203; "Sanguinocrate", III, 223.
- 35 See in the *Néologie* "Décaput," "Girondisme," "Orléaniste," "Prolétaire."
- 36 Mercier, *Le Nouveau Paris*, III, pp. 223, 233, 245; IV, p. 216; VI, p. 183.
- 37 See Mormile (1973), pp. 297ff.
- 38 Mercier, *Néologie*, préface.
- 39 "Activer, Adjoint, Alarmiste, Brûlement, Bureaucratie, Centraliser, Décade, Désorganisateur, Déverser, Fédératif, Modérantisme, Organiser, Secrétaire, Utiliser, Vandalisme, Vociférer.
- 40 In the first group one finds such words as:
- Agitateur, Aristocracisme, Asservissable, Bastillage, Chants patriotiques, Conjurateur, Couronné, Démagogue, Déprisonner, Despotiser, Esclaver, Expatriation, Extradition, Fanatiser, Fraternisation, Fuyardes, Girondisme, Gouvernemental, Inaboli, Incarcérateur, Incendiaire, Insurrection, Irrépublicain, Junctocratie, Juriconstitutionnaire, Légicide, Lèze-peuple, Liberticide, Monarchiser, Ochlocrate, Orléaniste, Panthéoniser, Patriophobie, Quatre-vingtneuviste, Républicaniser, Répuplicide, Représentation nationale, Seigneuriser, Spoliatrice, Tyranneau, Tyranniste, Vociférateur.
- 41 EPOQUE. La manie des nobles avait créé ce terme: est-il Epoqué convenablement?... Le dix-huitième siècle marchera dans l'avenir Epoqué des événements les plus extraordinaires.
- FORCENER. Marat...et consors, Forcenaient leur style, et prenaient cette démenche furieuse pour de l'énergie...
- GENERATEUR. L'égalité et la liberté sont...le principe nécessaire et Générateur de toute loi et de tout système de gouvernement régulier.
- LÉONISER. ...les révolutions donnent aux opinions cette fureur qui va Léoniser les peuples les plus accoutumés ou joug...
- TRONER.... Il est probable qu'avec le temps, aucun individu ne trônera en Europe...
- 42 See Ricken (1975), pp. 312f.
- 43 Mercier, *Néologie*, article "Encachoté."
- 44 Ibid., préface, p. xlv:

La prose est à nous; *sa marche est libre*; il n'appartient qu'à nous de lui imprimer un caractère plus vivant. Les prosateurs sont nos vrais poètes; qu'ils osent, et la langue prendra des accents tout nouveaux; les mots, les syllabes mêmes ne peuvent-ils pas se placer de manière que leur concours produise l'effet le plus inattendu? Nos constructions ne sont pas aussi rigides qu'on a voulu le persuader: je le prouverai dans le *Traité* que j'annonce...

45 Ibid., pp. xliiif.:

Quand j'aurai publié le "Traité sur les Inversions," j'aurai payé aux lettres mon dernier tribut;...j'aurai indiqué un nouvel idiome analogue à notre génie; car je serai toujours intelligible; je ne toucherai ni à la clarté de la langue, ni à son harmonie; je l'augmenterai seulement d'une foule de tournures qui introduiront des nuances infiniment différenciées,... La langue est à celui qui sait la faire obéir à ses idées. Laissez la langue entre les mains de nos...souligneurs, elle deviendra nigaude comme eux.... Que reste-t-il de toute la scolastique de l'abbé Desfontaines jusqu' à celle de nos jours? C'est du langage sorbonnique littéraire, rien de plus.

46 Cf. François (1929, 1959), Blinkenberg (1928–33), Le Bidois (1952).

47 Mercier, *Néologie*, article "Hiérarchie."

48 Victor Hugo, "Réponse à un acte d'accusation" (*Les contemplations*, livre premier, VII):

La poésie était la monarchie...  
 La langue était l'Etat avant quatre-vingt-neuf;  
 Les mots, bien ou mal nés, vivaient parqués en castes;...  
 Et je n'ignorais pas que la main courroucée  
 Qui délivre le mot, délivre la pensée...  
 Qui, si Beauzée est dieu, c'est vrai, je suis athée...  
 J'ai dit aux mots: Soyez république! Soyez  
 La fourmillière immense, et travaillez! Croyez  
 Aimez, vivez!...

On Mercier as a precursor of Hugo, see H. Temple Patterson, "Poetic Genesis: Sébastien Mercier into Victor Hugo," *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, II (1960); H.F. Majewski, *The Preromantic Imagination of L.-S. Mercier* (New York, 1971).

49 On the relationship between the Ideologues and their own time, see Moravia (1967, 1968, 1973a, b, c, 1974a, b), Picavet (1891), Régaldo (1970, 1976). On the role of linguistics in the thought of the Ideologues, cf. Acton (1961), Ricken (1974), Baum (1975), Haßler (1981). My arguments are based on Haßler (1984), Chapter 5.

50 F. Thurot, *De l'entendement et de la raison* (1830–3), I, p. 175.

51 See Moravia (1968), p. 48.

52 See Destutt de Tracy *Éléments d'idéologie* (1804–26), I, pp. 258ff.

53 Ibid., I, pp. 230ff.

54 Ibid., I, p. 266.

55 Ibid., I, p. 256.

56 Ibid., I, p. 236.

57 Before he published the *Éléments d'idéologie* (1804–26), Destutt de Tracy presented the Institut National with the following works: *Sur la faculté de penser* (1796, 1798), *Dissertation sur quelques questions d'Idéologie* (1799), *Réflexions sur les projets de Pasigraphie*, *Dissertation sur l'existence, et sur les hypothèses de Malebranche et de Berkeley* (1800), *De la métaphysique de Kant* (1802). On the relationship of Destutt de Tracy to Condillac, see also Moravia, *Il pensiero* (1974), pp. 319–64.

58 See Destutt de Tracy, *De la métaphysique de Kant*, in *Mémoires de l'Institut National des Sciences et Arts, Classe de Sciences morales et politiques*, Paris, year XI, vol. IV, p. 548:

Aujourd'hui nous autres Français, dans les sciences idéologiques, morales et politiques, nous n'avons aucun chef de secte, nous ne suivons la lumière de qui que ce soit. Chacun de ceux qui s'en occupent a ses opinions personnelles très indépendantes, et s'ils s'accordent sur beaucoup de points, c'est toujours sans en avoir le projet, souvent sans le savoir et quelquefois même sans le croire autant que cela est.

- 59 See Moravia, *Il pensiero* (1974), pp. 675–804.  
 60 Contact with the natural scientists was, in the opinion of the Ideologues, the guarantee for progress in other realms of human knowledge. See Baum (1975), p. 69.  
 61 The author of this work (Paris 1806) is J.B.Lemercier.  
 62 D.Thiébauld, *Grammaire philosophique* (1802), Préface.  
 63 Cf. Mongin (1803).  
 64 D.Thiébauld, *Traité du style* (1801), I, pp. 237f.: “l’esprit de cette langue, l’effet général et immédiat de ses principes, et par conséquent la source ou la cause générale et immédiate de sa marche et de ses règles.”  
 65 *Ibid.*, p. 238.  
 66 See Wilhelm von Humboldt’s diaries, *Tagebücher* (1916–18), I, p. 414.  
 67 See Thiébauld (1802), I, p. 100.  
 68 See *ibid.*, II, p. 82:

L’inversion consiste dans une construction où les mots suivent un ordre contraire à l’ordre analytique de nos idées. Cet ordre analytique est nécessairement primitif et préexistant chez ceux qui parlent, et nécessairement ceux qui écoutent y ramènent tout ce qu’on leur dit. Pourquoi donc ne l’appellerait-on pas l’ordre de la nature?

- 69 See Thurot (1830–3), I, p. ciii.  
 70 See, in addition to Thiébauld’s *Grammaire philosophique*, Debrun (1801), Gaultier (1806).  
 71 Régaldo (1970), p. 35.  
 72 See Wilhelm von Humboldt, *Tagebücher* (1916–18), II, pp. 35ff.  
 73 *Ibid.*, I, p. 378.  
 74 See R.-A.Sicard, *Elémens de grammaire générale appliqués à la langue française* (1808), I, p. xxviii.  
 75 *Ibid.*, I, p. 1.  
 76 P.F.Lancelin, *Introduction à l’analyse des sciences* (1801), I, p. xxxvii.  
 77 See P.Laromiguière, *Leçons de philosophie sur les principes de l’intelligence* (1826), I, pp. 219ff.  
 78 On the debate between Garat and Saint-Martin, see Moravia, *Il pensiero* (1974), pp. 294–304. On the indebtedness of Garat’s theory of language to Condillac, see D.J.Garat, *Mémoires historiques sur le XVIIIe siècle* (1821), I, p. 70; II, p. 44.  
 79 See *Séances des Ecoles Normales* (1800), série Débats, III, pp. 61ff.  
 80 *Ibid.*, III, pp. 141–2.  
 81 *Ibid.*, p. 44.  
 82 *Ibid.*, p. 111.  
 83 See F.Thurot, *Œuvres posthumes* (1837), pp. 314f.  
 84 See L.J.J.Daube, *Essai d’idéologie servant d’introduction à la grammaire générale* (1803), p. 23.  
 85 P.J.G.Cabanis, *Rapports du physique et du moral de l’homme* (1802), II, pp. 348ff.  
 86 *Ibid.*, I, p. 152.  
 87 *Ibid.*, II, pp. 343ff.  
 88 *Ibid.*, II, p. 230.  
 89 Cf. J.de Maimieux, *Pasigraphie* (1797).  
 90 Published in the *Mémoires de l’Institut National des Sciences et des Arts pour l’an IV de la République, Sciences morales et politiques*, Tome premier, Paris, an VI, pp. i–iii. The original version of the text, excerpts of which are presented here in translation, are in Ricken (1974), pp. 307f. The original French text is also located in the entry marked “accessit” by Lancelin (1801), I, pp. x–xii.

- 91 Cf. S.-M. Degérando, *Considérations sur les diverses méthodes à suivre dans l'observation des peuples sauvages* (1800), which is a version of the prize-essay that was published a little later. Degérando distanced himself here and in other works from Condillac's conception of "sensation transformée."
- 92 Ibid, I, pp. xviii–xxi.
- 93 See Thurot (1837), pp. 314f.; Daube (1803), p. 23.
- 94 See Degérando (1800), I, p. 131.
- 95 In letters to Madame de Staël, Degérando expressed his dissatisfaction with Cabanis's work. See Degérando (1868). See also Moravia, *Il pensiero* (1974), p. 423.
- 96 See F.-P.-G. Maine de Biran, *Mémoire de la décomposition de la pensée*, in *Œuvres* (1920–6), IV, p. 149.
- 97 Moravia (1968).
- 98 Degérando (1804).
- 99 Cf. Haßler (1981).
- 100 On the influence of the Ideologues on Wilhelm von Humboldt, see Aarsleff (1977), as well as the critical papers by Gipper (1981), Oesterreicher (1981).
- 101 W. von Humboldt, *Tagebücher*, I, p. 449.
- 102 W. von Humboldt, *Über das vergleichende Sprachstudium in Beziehung auf die verschiedenen Epochen der Sprachenentwicklung*, in *Werke* (1960), III, p. 20.
- 103 Pott (1876), Aarsleff (1975), p. 432.
- 104 W. von Humboldt, *Briefe an Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi* (1892), pp. 64ff.
- 105 W. von Humboldt, *Tagebücher*, I, p. 446.
- 106 W. von Humboldt, *Über die Verschiedenheit des menschlichen Sprachbaus und ihren Einfluß auf die geistige Entwicklung des Menschengeschlechts*, in *Werke* (1960), III, p. 414.
- 107 J.-B.-B. Aubry, *Anti-Condillac, ou harangue aux idéologues modernes* (1801).
- 108 Taine (1868), p. 2.
- 109 De Maistre in a letter to Bonald, see J. de Maistre, *Œuvres complètes* (1884–6), VI, pp. 114, 138. See Aarsleff (1969), p. 228.
- 110 L. de Bonald, *Œuvres complètes* (1859), III, p. 1198.
- 111 J.-M. Degérando, *De la génération des connaissances humaines* (1802).
- 112 Bonald (1859), III, p. 1198.
- 113 Ibid., III, p. 98.
- 114 J. de Maistre, *Œuvres complètes* (1884–6), VI, pp. 138ff.
- 115 On the history and political function of Bonald's ideas about the theory of language, see Bastier (1974).
- 116 Bonald (1859), III, p. 61.
- 117 Ibid., pp. 122ff.
- 118 Ibid., pp. 207ff.
- 119 Ibid., pp. 356ff.
- 120 Ibid., p. 149.
- 121 See Bastier (1974), pp. 540ff.
- 122 Ibid.
- 123 Bonald (1859), II, pp. 578–94.
- 124 Ibid., II, p. 578.
- 125 Ibid., II, p. 580.
- 126 Ibid., III, p. 1198:
- Les dictionnaires et les grammaires sont donc des recueils de choses jugées, et en quelque sorte les codes des différents états littéraires, comme les recueils des lois et d'ordonnances sont les codes des sociétés politiques.
- 127 Ibid., I, p. 5.
- 128 Cited *ibid.*, I, p. xxxi.

**15 CONCLUDING REMARKS: ASSESSMENT OF THE  
DISCUSSION OF LANGUAGE IN THE FRENCH  
ENLIGHTENMENT**

- 1 Krauss (1978), p. 11.
- 2 Marx/Engels (1974), II, p. 138.
- 3 On Vaucanson, see Doyon and Liagre (1966).
- 4 J.O.de la Mettrie, *Œuvres philosophiques* (1751), p. 69.
- 5 W.von Kempelen, *Mechanismus der menschlichen Sprache nebst Beschreibung einer sprechenden Maschine* (1791).
- 6 D.Diderot, *Œuvres complètes* (1969), II, pp. 713f.
- 7 Diderot (1969), III, pp. 239ff.
- 8 Chomsky (1969, 1971a). See the critical assessments of the term “Cartesian Linguistics” by Aarsleff (1970, 1971b), Joly (1972a), Suchsland (1972).
- 9 See Ricken (1978), p. 177.
- 10 M.Bréal, *Essai de sémantique* (1904), pp. 255ff.
- 11 F.de Saussure, *Cours de linguistique générale*, Première partie, Chapter 1; Deuxième partie, Chapter 6.
- 12 See Argenot (1971).
- 13 Cf. Bunak (1966, 1973), Höpp (1970), Ludovico (1979), Möhres (1968), Ploog (1974), Scharf (1974, 1976), Schwidetzky (1973), Vollmer (1975), Zisterer (1975).
- 14 Konrad Lorenz made this error in his introductory preface to Höpp (1970).
- 15 Friedrich Engels, *Dialektik der Natur. Notizen und Fragmente*. In: Marx/Engels (1974), XX, p. 240.

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# Index

- Académie française* 67, 114, 167, 192, 194, 201, 205, 206, 224; *Dictionnaire* 65, 193, 201, 221 *see also Institut National des Sciences et Arts*
- adjectives 120–1
- aesthetic(s) 147; issues 84; sensualist 115 *see also Diderot*; literary
- aesthetics
- Algarotti, Francesco 131
- Amyot, Jacques 199
- animal(s) 8, 10, 14–16, 17, 18–19, 33–4, 48, 58, 73, 83–4, 90, 94–5, 101–2, 106, 134, 138, 141, 147, 148, 150–5, 158
- anthropogenesis 157, 158–9
- anthropology 7, 8; Descartes's 9
- Anti-Condillac 220
- Anti-Lucrèce 152
- Arabs 176
- Aristotle 122, 137
- Arnauld, Antoine 4, 6, 17, 21, 22, 23, 32, 45, 46, 52, 55; on Malebranche 47–9, 51; and Nicole, Pierre 24, 27, 31
- association of ideas *see liaison des idées*
- Atala* (François René de Chateaubriand) 204
- Augustine, St 4, 26, 28, 45, 55, 95
- automatism 34, 48, 151
- automaton(s) 9, 14–15; theory 18, 22, 101, 151, 154
- Babeuf, François Noël 172
- Bacon, Francis 163, 164, 176; *idola fori* 164
- baseness/*bassesse* 166–7
- (Batteux, Charles 116, 120, 123, 126, 127–9, 205, 206; on Beauzée 127 *see also grammar(s)*; language; word order
- Bayle, Pierre 8, 43, 57, 77; *Dictionnaire historique et critique* 65
- Beauzée, Nicolas 96, 106, 108, 123, 125–7, 129, 146, 205–6, 224, 231 *see also grammar(s)*; word order
- Berkeley, George 85–6, 178, 183 *see also language*; Locke
- Berlin Academy of Sciences 65, 88, 96, 129, 140, 145, 166, 168, 185, 187, 188, 210
- Bernier, François 4
- Besonnenheit* 147, 188
- Bible, the 47, 139, 222
- biblical: criticism 134–39; myth of creation 135–6
- Bleek, Wilhelm Heinrich Immanuel 158
- body, the 10, 13–14, 16, 17, 18–19, 41, 48; and the soul 9, 10, 11, 22–3, 34, 48, 51, 113
- Boileau, Nicolas 4, 45, 46, 52
- Boinvilliers, Jean-Etienne-Judith Forestier 193
- Boisregard, Andry de 163
- Bonald, Louis de 97, 132–3, 204, 218, 221–5, 231 *see also language*
- Bonnet, Charles 97, 152, 153, 154
- Bornage* 201
- Bossuet, Jaques Bénigne 46
- Bonhours, Dominique 206
- Bougeant, Guillaume Hyacinthe 151
- brain, the 36–7, 40–1
- Bréal, Michel 230
- Brisson, Marcoul 194
- Buffon, Georges Louis de 101–2, 149, 152, 154
- Cabanis, Pierre Jean Georges 89, 207, 208, 212, 213, 214, 217, 218, 228
- Cartesianism 4–5, 21, 23, 48, 57, 134 *see also dualism*; language; Port-Royal

- Cesarotti, Melchior 187  
 chain of beings/*chaîne des êtres* 149  
 Charron, Pierre 16  
*choses* 73, 162, 163, 226 *see also* things  
 Cicero 55, 126, 129 *see also* word order  
 climate theory 130  
*coeur* 28, 29  
 cognition 45, 97, 102, 116, 123, 131, 153,  
 155–6, 176, 178  
 Comenius, Jan Amos 58, 59, 227  
*Comité d'instruction publique de la  
 Convention Nationale* 192  
 communication 140–3, 152–3, 156, 157  
*concevoir* 25, 41, 47  
 Condillac, Etienne Bonnot de 64, 65,  
 67, 68, 70, 71, 75, 78–110, 111,  
 115–19, 120, 121, 122, 125, 132,  
 135, 142–3, 152, 153, 154, 156, 159,  
 166, 178, 183, 184–5, 187, 194,  
 200, 201, 204, 205, 207, 209, 210,  
 211–12, 213, 221, 222, 223–4,  
 228–9, 231; brother of 167;  
*Cours d'études* 98; du Marsais on 123,  
 124; *Essai sur l'origine des  
 connaissances humaines* 64, 70, 80–1,  
 85, 87, 88, 90, 92, 121, 122, 132, 140,  
 145–6, 182–3, 184–5, 218, 228;  
*Grammar* 98, 99–110, 141; on  
 grammar 108; Herder on 146, 147–8;  
 Humboldt on 220; on the language of  
 action 101; *Lettre de M.l'Abbé de  
 Condillac* 98; on Locke 98; and the  
 Prince of Parma 95–6, 97, 99;  
 Racine's address to the French  
 Academy 108; *Traité des animaux* 95,  
 98, 152 *see also* Anti-Condillac;  
 language; Locke; Marx; Rousseau;  
*sensation transformée*; sensualism;  
 word order  
 Condorcet, Jean-Antoine-Nicolas de  
 Caritat de 89, 160, 194, 195, 207, 209  
 construction/*construction* 123, 124;  
*analytique* 125; *figures de 32*  
 Cordemoy, Géraud de 33–7, 40, 45,  
 51–2, 55, 58, 80, 94; *Discours physique  
 de la parole* 33 *see also*  
 language  
 Corneille, Pierre 200  
 Coste, Pierre 75  
 Cousin, Victor 218  
 Cureau de la Chambre, Marin 22  
 129, 166, 187, 207 *see also* Diderot  
 (*Encycopédie*)  
 Dalgarno, George 12, 162  
 Darwin, Charles 149–50, 157–9; *The  
 Descent of Man* 158  
 Darwin, Erasmus 158  
 Darwinism 158–9  
 deaf-mutes 121, 155, 211 *see also* God;  
 language; *muets de convention*  
 de Biran, Maine 217  
 de Brosse, Charles 65, 106, 180, 187  
 definition(s) 162–4, 166  
 de Gebelin, Court 130  
 Degérando, Joseph-Marie 207, 216–18,  
 220, 221 *see also* language  
 De la Buetonne, Rétif 200  
 de Maistre, Joseph 97, 221, 222  
 Demosthenes 129  
 de Prades, Abbé Jean-Martin 91, 96;  
*Affaire* 91–4, 95, 144 *see also* Locke  
 Des Bords des Doires, Olivier 46  
 Descartes, René 3–4, 8–23, 25, 26, 28,  
 33–4, 36, 42, 43, 45, 48, 55, 56, 57,  
 58, 59, 60, 68, 70, 74–5, 102–3, 134,  
 150, 152, 154, 161–2, 163, 176, 212,  
 227–8, 229; Condillac on 101, 104;  
*Discours de la méthode* 12–17, 19;  
*Méditations métaphysiques* 17, 18, 19,  
 22, 25, 26, 162; *Les Passions de l'âme*  
 17 *see also* dualism; Hobbes; innate  
 ideas; language  
 Desfontaines, Pierre-François Guyot 204,  
 205; *Dictionnaire néologique* 66, 191  
 Des Gabets, Robert 59, 60  
 Destutt de Tracy, Antoine-Louis-Claude  
 89, 206, 207, 208, 211, 214;  
*Eléments d'idéologie* 89 *see also*  
 language  
 dictionaries 64–6, 113, 200, 224  
*dictionnaire* 65–6  
*Dictionnaire anti-philosophique* 65, 151  
*Dictionnaire de Trévoux* 65  
 Diderot, Denis 27, 65, 84, 85–6, 111,  
 116, 119–23, 140, 144, 149, 155,  
 166–7, 169, 178, 182, 183, 187, 200,  
 204, 205, 207, 228; Beauzée on 123,  
 125; *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire  
 raisonné des Sciences, des Arts et des  
 Métiers* 65, 87, 88, 90, 91, 94, 99,  
 119, 123, 146, 164, 166, 181, 224;  
*Lettre sur les aveugles* 87; *Lettre sur  
 les sourds et muets* 64, 85–6, 88, 119,  
 120–3; *Pensées philosophiques* 87,

- 155 *see also* poetic hieroglyph;  
sensualism; word order
- Diodorus 136, 137
- Discours de la connaissances des bêtes*  
(Ignace-Gaston Pardies) 151
- Domergue, Urbain 130, 132, 160, 169,  
192–9 *see also* language dualism 28,  
48, 94; Cartesian 8–9, 11, 33, 44, 56,  
57–8, 65, 112;
- Descartes's 51, 57, 151, 226; Locke's 178;  
Lockean 213
- du Bois, Goibaud 44–5, 46
- du Bos, Jean-Baptiste 51, 53–4, 55, 75, 78,  
84, 115, 164–5; *Réflexions* 54, 122
- du Cerceau, Jean-Antoine 53
- Duclos, Charles Pineau 165
- du Marsais, César Chesneau 65, 75, 106,  
110, 111, 115, 120, 123–5, 126, 127,  
128, 129, 139–40, 206; *Des Tropes* 40  
*see also* language
- Ecoles centrales* 207, 208
- Einbildung 49–50
- Encyclopédie* *see* Diderot
- Enlightenment, the viii, 87, 88, 149, 200,  
206, 217, 221, 223, 226, 227, 230;  
materialism 9, 70, 95, 228 *see also*  
sensualism
- Epicurus 18, 19, 59, 137
- epistemology 78; Cartesian 227;  
Descartes's 48–9; rationalist 25;  
sensualistic 27
- esprit* 28, 29, 41; *positif* 209, 210, 211
- esprits animaux* 10
- Estienne, Henri 5
- etymology 67
- Euler, Leonhard 131
- Evolution of Language and Reason,*  
*The* 232
- facial expressions 34
- Fénelon, François de Salignac de laMothe  
53, 55, 57, 114–15, 204; *Les aventures*  
*de Télémaque* 53; *Dialogues sur*  
*l'éloquence* 52
- figures of speech 39 *see also* words
- Fontenelle, Bernard le Bovier de 57, 58,  
77, 111, 161
- form 189–90; and matter 189
- Formey, Jean-Henri-Samuel 96–7, 145
- Frain du Tremblay, Jean 139
- French 5–7, 52, 53, 54, 107, 115, 121,  
128, 129, 132, 175, 181, 192, 197–8,  
199, 201, 219, 221–2 *see also* Arabs;  
Latin; word order
- French Revolution, the 130–3, 191–2, 200,  
201, 202, 207, 213, 221, 222
- Furetière, Antoine 65
- Galilei, Galileo 13
- Gamaches, Etienne-Simon de 53, 115
- Garat, Dominique 130, 131, 207, 212
- Gassendi, Pierre 4–5, 8, 16, 17–19, 22–3,  
27, 41, 48, 49, 51, 58–9, 60, 162, 163,  
227 *see also* sensualism *génie de la*  
*langue* 175, 180, 218 *see also* genius of  
a language
- genius of a language 186–7, 189 *see also*  
*génie de la langue*
- geometries, non-Euclidean 175; *see also*  
language; mathematics; *méthode*  
*géométrique*
- Gibert, Balthasar 46–7, 49
- Girard, Gabriel 106; *La justesse de la*  
*langue française* 66
- Girondins 207
- God 16, 26, 47–8, 94, 136, 137, 138, 139,  
164, 224; and the deaf-mute 90, 94, 211
- Goethe, Johann Wolfgang 146
- Gottsched, Johann Christoph 129
- grammar(s) 66, 67, 113, 131, 177, 224;  
Batteux on 126; Beauzée on 125 *see*  
*also* Condillac; Port-Royal
- Gregory of Nyssa, St 137
- Greek 128;
- Greeks 176
- Haeckel, Ernst 158–9
- Haller, Albrecht von 154
- Helvétius, Claude-Adrien 65, 70, 89, 160,  
166, 167, 169, 207; *De l'esprit* 64, 89,  
92, 99, 100; *De l'homme* 64, 89
- Helvétius, Madame 89, 207
- Hennings, Just Christian 154
- Herder, Johann Gottfried 65, 129, 146–8,  
149–50, 156–7, 159; 187–9, 231;  
*Kalligone* 156 *see also* language
- Hermes* (James Harris) 190
- hieroglyphs, Egyptian 165
- History of French Literature in the*  
*Eighteenth Century* (Hermann  
Hettner) 79
- History of the Human Spirit* 150
- History of the Opinions concerning the*  
*Origin and Diversity of the Languages*  
*of Peoples* 135

- Hobbes, Thomas 17–18, 48, 49, 51, 58, 59, 176; on Descartes 19–22, 104, 164, 227
- Holbach, Paul Henri d' 8, 166
- Hopi 175
- Hugo, Victor 205–6
- humanity 3, 13, 18–19, 23
- humans 142, 150, 154 *see also* animals; communication
- Humboldt, Wilhelm von 175, 190, 218–19, 220, 231 *see also* language
- Hume, David 85
- idea(s) 18, 26–7, 40, 41, 56, 71–2, 73, 116–17, 123, 166; accessory 31, 39; auxiliary 180; connection of 80; in gestural language 119; innate 68, 69, 81, 93, 94, 112, 116, 177, 179, 201, 227; Locke on 80, 92–3, 94; origin of 28, 93–4; and signs 35, 80, 176, 188 *see also liaison des idées; plan des idées*
- Ideologues 89, 190, 191, 192, 196, 200, 201, 206–20, 222, 230, 231
- idéologie/ideology* 89, 206, 218
- imagination* 3, 5, 7, 10–11, 18, 19, 22, 26, 28, 32, 36, 40–1, 42, 44–5, 46, 47, 48, 49–50, 51, 52, 54, 55, 56–7, 58, 82–3, 113–14, 126
- imaginer* 41, 47
- inequality, social 143–4
- infinity 94
- Institut National des Sciences et Arts* 207, 208, 211, 214, 218
- intellection pure/pure* intellect 10, 162
- intonation 31–2
- inversions* 113, 114, 116, 118, 128, 204
- Jacobi, Friedrich Heinrich 219
- Jacobins* 192, 200, 202, 207
- Jansenism 4–5, 21
- Jansenists, the 92
- Jancourt, Chevalier de 146
- Jesuits, the 92
- Journal de la Langue Française* 192, 193, 196, 197, 198
- Juilletisé* 201
- Kant, Immanuel 190, 219
- knowledge 76–7, 81; 87–8, 143–4, 177, 181, 184
- La Bruyère, Jean de 52, 114
- La Fontaine, Jean de 4–5, 151
- Laharpe, François 97, 172, 192, 204
- Lamarck, Jean-Baptiste de Monet 157, 159
- Lambert, Johann Heinrich 67, 188 *see also* semiotics
- La Mettrie, Julien Offray de 57, 90, 154, 228; *L'homme machine* 9, 90; *Traité de l'âme* 90
- Lamy, Bernard 38–43, 45, 51–2, 55, 58, 75, 80, 94, 115, 116, 122, 134, 135–6, 137, 139; *Cours de Morale* 43; *Rhetoric* 38, 39, 41, 43, 54, 60, 113–14, 135, 136–7
- Lamy, François 45–6, 58
- Lancelin, P.F. 211
- Lancelot, Claude 4, 26
- langage* 146 *see also* language; *langue*
- language vii–viii, 8, 18–19, 20, 24, 25, 27, 28, 34, 35–6, 37, 42, 46, 48, 59, 65–6, 67, 68, 103, 116, 121, 131, 169, 172, 175–6, 179, 182, 212, 214, 221, 222, 226–7, 229, 230; abuse of 83, 165–6; of action 80, 83, 121, 152, 157, 212; Batteux on 126; Berkeley on 86, 178; Bonald on 223, 224; Cartesian interpretation of 38; Condillac on 82–3, 84, 89, 102–3, 106, 108, 122, 157–8, 179–83, 188, 208; Cordemoy on 33, 56; Degérando on 217; Descartes on 9–14, 15–16, 51; Destutt de Tracy on 208; Domergue on 194; du Marsais on 124; gestural 121, 156; Herder on 187–8; Humboldt on 218, 220; Laveaux on 130; Locke on 71–2, 73–7, 79, 164, 178; of mathematics 41–2; Maupertuis on 183–5, 185; Michaelis on 185–6; origin of 42, 68, 96, 102–3, 126, 134–40, 142, 143, 144–8, 150, 155–6, 158–9, 185, 212, 222, 223, 226, 231–2; pedagogy 59; of politics 224; sensualistic theory of 68, 128; Sicard on 211; sign language 155; and thought 68–9, 80, 83, 85, 88, 96, 102, 113–14, 121, 131, 146, 147, 148, 174–5, 177, 178–9, 185, 189, 208–9, 213, 214, 231; universal 11–12, 66 *see also* animals; figures of speech; French; grammar(s); imagination; languages; *langue*; Latin; lexicology; *mots*; phonetic; word(s); semiotics; signs; word order
- languages 12, 27, 38, 107–8, 109, 124, 125, 126–7, 131, 143–4, 174, 175–6, 177, 179–81, 182, 184, 187, 188–9,

- 208, 214; Babylonian confusion of 135, 137, 139, 140, 150; development of 82; non-European 66; translation of 183 *see also* cognition; French; Hopi; *langue*; Latin
- langue* 146; *caractère d'une* 210; and language 209–10; *républicaine/monarchique* 200 *see also génie d'une langue*; language; languages
- Laplace, Pierre Simon de 207
- Laromiguière, Pierre 212
- Latin 54, 111–12, 115, 116, 128 *see also* French; word order
- Laveaux, Jean-Charles Thibault de 130–1, 132 *see also* language; word order
- Lavoisier, Antoine Laurent de 88
- Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm 12, 65, 70, 78, 88, 151, 162, 176–7, 178
- Le Laboureur, Louis 111
- Lenin, Vladimir Ilyich 85
- Leroy, Charles-Georges 153–4
- Lessing, Gotthold Ephraim 122
- lexicology 67; French 64–5
- liaison des idées* 79–80, 116–17, 119, 127, 152
- liberté* 165, 167, 168, 169, 172
- Linguet, Simon-Nicolas-Henri 200
- linguistics vii, 3–4, 94 *see also* sign literary aesthetics 52–5, 115, 116
- Livy 126 *see also* word order
- Locke, John 49, 57, 59, 67, 68, 70–8, 84, 85, 109, 115, 131, 153, 164, 177–8, 189, 200, 201, 222; and the *Affaire de Prades* 92; Berkeley on 86; Condillac on 81, 98; *An Essay on the Origin of Human Understanding* 60, 68, 70–2, 74, 75, 76, 77, 139, 151, 166, 176 *see also* dualism; ideas; language; semiotics; sensualism
- Lucretius 18, 19, 59, 134, 137, 138, 149
- Mably, Gabriel Bonnot de 166, 167–8
- Maillet, Benoît de 149
- Malebranche, Nicolas 44–5, 47, 48–9, 51, 54, 57–8, 60, 70, 212; *On the Investigation of Truth* 44 *see also* style
- Marx, Karl 70; on Condillac 85; and Engels, Friedrich 9
- materialism 212 *see also* Enlightenment
- mathematics 56, 186, 209 *see also* language; *méthode géométrique*; *ordre géométrique*
- Maupertuis, Louis de 88, 96, 140, 144, 145, 149, 154, 155, 159, 183–5
- see also* language
- Mazza, Pater Andrea 100
- meaning 30, 41
- Medlier, Jean 164
- Meier, Georg Friedrich 154
- Mendelssohn, Moses 145, 146
- Mercier, Louis-Sebastien 132, 160, 192, 194, 195, 199–205, 211, 231; on Copernicus 201; *Néologie* 199, 200, 201–5; *Treatise on Inversions* 205
- Mersenne, Marin 11–12, 17, 23
- metaphor(s) 67, 70
- méthode géométrique* 47
- Michaelis, Johann David 146, 185–7 *see also* language
- Mirabeau, Honoré Gabriel Riquetti de 132, 200
- Molière, Jean-Baptiste Poquelin 4; *Bourgeois gentilhomme* 34
- Monboddo, James Burnet 140, 145, 148, 156
- Montaigne, Michel de 44, 199, 200
- Montesquieu, Charles de Secondat de 165, 168, 200
- Morellet, André 172, 192, 198, 204
- Mot et la chose, Le* 165
- mots* 226; *abus des* 69–70, 173, 230 *see also* words
- muets de convention* 121
- Müller, Max 158
- Napione, Galeani 187
- Napoleon, Bonaparte 66, 199, 200, 207, 218, 220
- nature 152; human 7–8
- neology 66, 67, 191, 193, 194, 200
- Newton, Isaac 77–8, 201
- Nicole, Pierre 46 *see also* Arnaud, Antoine
- On Language with Regard to the History of Humanity* (Anton) 63
- ontogenesis 155–6
- or do naturalis* 112–13 *see also* *ordre naturel*; word order
- ordre* 168; *analytique* 125–6; *géométrique* 45; *métaphysique* 127–8; *naturel* 42, 54, 113–16, 121, 123, 129–30, 133, 210 *see also* *ordonnaturalis*; word order
- organism 149, 150, 152
- original sin 26, 28
- Palissot de Montenois, Charles 168

- Paré, Ambroise 161  
 Pascal, Blaise 4, 28–9, 30, 32, 45, 55;  
*Pensées* 28, 29–30 *see also* style  
*passion(s)* 3, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11, 16, 22, 28, 29,  
 30, 37, 39, 45, 51, 113, 126, 132,  
 158  
 Perrault, Charles 115  
*peuple* 167, 171, 172  
 philosophers 183  
 phonetic: harmony 12; language 73, 121,  
 134, 152, 156, 158, 179  
 phylogenesis 155–6  
*plan d'idées* 183, 184, 185  
 Plato 138, 212; *Cratylus* 137, 161  
 Pluche, Noël-Antoine 139  
 poetic hieroglyph 122  
 Portalis, Jean-Etienne-Marie 168  
 Port-Royal 4, 39, 45, 102, 106;  
 Cartesian principles in 24–5;  
*Grammar* 6, 7, 21, 24–5, 26, 32, 38,  
 107, 108, 109–10; *Logic* 7, 21, 24,  
 25–8, 30, 31, 32, 39, 40, 45, 46, 51, 73,  
 74, 103, 104, 162–4, 175–6, 180  
*see also* sensualism  
 preformation 149  
*préjugés* 161, 162, 168  
 Prince of Parma *see* Condillac  
 Pufendorf, Samuel 134, 138, 139, 164
- Quintilian 55
- Racine, Jean 4  
*raison* 3–4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 14–15, 28, 29, 36,  
 38–9, 41, 42, 46, 52, 53, 55–6, 69, 111,  
 113, 119, 122, 125, 127, 130, 132 *see*  
*also* reflection; sensation  
 Ramsay, André-Michel de 204  
 rationalism 128, 161 *see also* word order  
 reflection/*réflexion* 71, 72, 79, 111, 115,  
 118, 122, 147, 213 *see also*  
*raison*; sensation  
 Régis, Sylvain 57, 162  
 Regius, Henricus 9  
 Régnier-Desmarais, François Lépharin  
 106  
 religion 97; abuse of 164  
 representation 44, 46, 49, 52, 55, 69,  
 122  
 Restaut, Pierre 206  
 Restoration, the 218, 222  
 rhetoric 28, 40, 54–5, 56, 124, 126, 161;  
 ancient 53  
*Rhetoric as a Source of Preromantic*  
*Irrationalism in the History of Ideas*  
*and Literature* (Dockhorn) 54–5
- Richelet, Pierre 65  
 Rivarol, Antoine de 129, 130, 131–2, 205  
 Robespierre, Maximilien Marie Isidore  
 160, 192, 194, 200, 207  
 Roche, Antoine-Marin 93; *Traité de la*  
*nature de l'âme* 95  
 Roman(s) 176; republic 180  
 Rousseau, Jean-Jacques 41, 64, 65, 87,  
 96, 111, 129, 140, 142–4, 145–6, 147,  
 149, 159, 166, 168, 169, 172, 186,  
 200, 204, 223–4; and Condillac  
 96, 142; definition of a savage 142;  
*Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité*  
 64, 88, 91–2, 145; *Emile* 88, 145
- Saint-Martin, Louis-Claude de 212  
 Sainte-Beuve, Charles Augustin 48  
 Saussure, Ferdinand de 231 *see also*  
 sign(s)  
 Schiller, Friedrich 190  
 Schleicher, August 157–8, 158  
 sciences, the 76 *see also* sign(s)  
 semiotics: Lambert's 188; Locke's 67, 77  
*see also* sign(s); *simeiotiki*  
 Seneca 44  
*sensation(s)/sensation* 71–3, 79, 111,  
 117–18, 119, 122, 208, 213; and  
 abstract thought 120; *transformée* 116,  
 117, 140, 154, 156, 213, 215, 216,  
 217, 220, 229 *see also* *raison*;  
 reflection; transformation sensual,  
 impressions 10  
 sensualism 21–2, 27, 68, 85, 89, 90–1, 98,  
 99, 150, 151, 154, 161, 166, 183, 204,  
 213, 220; Condillac's 78, 81, 93, 95,  
 100, 117, 128, 155, 178, 190, 206;  
 Diderot's 86–7, 90; and the  
 Enlightenment 148, 207, 209, 211,  
 212; Gassendi's 22, 48–9, 151;  
 Locke's 71–3, 115, 139, 147, 154,  
 178; Port-Royal on 103 *see also*  
 aesthetics; word order  
 Sicard, Roch-Ambroise 195, 207, 211 *see*  
*also* language  
 Sieves, Emmanuel Joseph 207  
 sign(s)/*signes* 76–7, 78–80, 120, 162,  
 166, 215–16; and language 206, 208–9;  
 linguistic 11, 17, 27, 30, 35, 66–7, 73–4,  
 82, 83–4, 104–5, 138, 141, 176,  
 177, 178, 179, 186, 208; Saussure's

- conception of 230; in scientific thinking 215–16 *see also* ideas  
*simeiotiki* 76–7 *see also* semiotics  
 Simon, Richard 134, 137–8, 139; *Histoire critique du Vieux Testament* 137  
 Smith, Adam 140, 145  
*Société d'Auteuil* 207  
*Société des Amateurs de la Langue Française* 192, 194, 211  
*Société des amis de la Constitution* 192  
*Société des observateurs de l'homme* 190, 213  
 society 140–1, 143  
 Society of the Lovers of the French Language 160  
 Sorbonne, the 4, 5, 43, 92  
 soul 10, 11, 16–17, 25, 26, 34–5, 36, 39, 55, 93, 94–5, 150, 153, 154 *see also* body  
 sound(s) 34, 36; and thought 35  
 speech 16  
 Spinoza, Baruch 70, 164  
 spirit 8, 11  
 style 32, 40–1, 45, 52, 53–4, 118, 131; Malebranche on 44; Pascal on 29  
 subject, the 123  
*sujet* 172  
 Süßmilch, Johann Peter 96, 145–6, 147  
 syntax 67, 69, 112, 126  
*Systema naturae* (Karl von Linne) 152  
  
 Taine, Hypolyte 221  
 Telemachus motif 114  
*Télémaque* 204  
 Thiébauld, Dieudonné 210–11 *see also* word order  
 things 160–2, 166 *see also* choses;  
 words  
 thought 8, 10, 11, 18, 20–1, 42, 69, 92, 112, 116, 121, 142, 176, 179, 182; abstract 120; origin of 118 *see also* language; sensation; sound  
 Thurot, François 207, 211, 213, 214, 218  
 transformation 149, 155 *see also* sensation transformée  
 translatability 67 *see also* languages  
 truth 74, 75  
  
 Turgot, Anne-Robert-Jacques 65, 89, 140, 144, 184, 207  
  
 universals 81  
 usage 5–7, 38–9, 66, 73, 119, 125, 163  
*ut pictura poesis* 122  
  
 Vaucanson, Jacques de 228  
 Vaugelas, Claude Favre de 5, 163, 193, 205, 206; *Remarques* 7  
 Versailles 6–7  
 Vico, Giambattista 176  
 Volney, Constantin François de 207  
 Voltaire, François Marie Arouet 65, 67, 78, 88, 95, 111, 129–30, 149, 151, 153, 166, 168, 200; *Dictionnaire Philosophique* 65, 151; *Lettres philosophiques sur les Anglais* 78, 151  
  
 Warburton, William 165  
 Weisgerber, Leo 174  
*Weltanschauung* 4  
 Whorf, Benjamin L. 175  
 Wilkins, John 12, 162  
 Wolff, Christian 63  
 word(s) 27, 29–31, 35, 36, 58, 73–4, 75, 77, 116, 119, 123, 166–7, 168–9, 172, 178, 198; abuse of 164–5, 168–9, 171, 172–3, 174, 183, 226; categories in Condillac 108–9; figural use of 40–1; new 170–1, 193; and things 160–8 *see also* mots, abus des  
 word order 54, 111–12, 115, 117, 121, 122–5, 132, 133, 198, 226; Batteux on 127; Beauzée on 125; Condillac on 108, 126–7, 129, 130; Diderot on 126–7, 129, 130; French 111–12, 113, 114–15, 116, 117, 122, 123, 127, 130–3, 200, 205; Latin 116, 127; Laveaux on 130–1; in Livy and Cicero 126; natural 32, 51, 128, 132, 222, 230, 231; the problem of 129; rationalist theory of 129; sensualist view of 118–19; Thiébauld on 210 *see also* construction, figures de; grammar(s); ordre  
 world-view 174–5  
 writing system, universal 66–7