The Fabric of Thought:

Reason, Language and Experience in German Philosophy from Hamann to Habermas

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For my father, Bill Gray,

who gave me words and worlds.

Declaration of Authorship

I, Jonathan Gray, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed:

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Abstract

This thesis examines aspects of the relationship between reason, language and experience by means of an engagement with the legacy of the eighteenth century "linguistic turn" in German philosophy. The examination begins with the emergence of the idea of "pure reason", including efforts to establish a calculus of thought inspired by innovations in mathematics and the natural sciences. These aspirations to formalise and mechanise reason have parallels with the "thin" conception of rationality in analytic philosophy in the twentieth century. Hamann and Herder's works provide the basis for an alternative "thick" conception of language as a socially and historically situated "fabric of thought" which provides the conditions of possibility for both reason and experience. This conception has advantages over the twentieth century linguistic turn in accounting for how language structures experience and sustains social worlds, because the latter maintains a disproportionate focus on what Charles Taylor describes as language's "designative" and "information-encoding" capacities. The works of the Early German Romantics and Nietzsche provide resources for a richer and more ambitious vision for the role of philosophy in creatively reshaping this fabric, articulating new ideals, and opening up horizons for new social, cultural and political ways of being. Heidegger's and Gadamer's work is used to suggest how human beings simultaneously shape and are shaped by language, how languages give form to experience, and how it is that language can be creatively reshaped in response to experience. Finally, the thesis examines how debates between Gadamer's hermeneutics and Habermas's critical theory echo Hamann's encounter with Kant. These thinkers broaden the scope of what should be considered relevant to philosophy as a form of critical social and cultural praxis.

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1. Why A History of Philosophy?

"[A] critique of philosophizing reason cannot succeed without a history of philosophy." – Friedrich Schlegel (Frank, 2004: 13-14)

In this introduction I will do three things. Firstly, I will briefly introduce some of the central philosophical concerns about the relationship between reason, language and experience which motivate this inquiry. Secondly, I will discuss how engagements with the history of philosophy might contribute to enriching contemporary debates about these concerns. Thirdly, I will explain why I believe that the particular period of German philosophy that I engage with makes such an important contribution, and why I have chosen Hamann's 1759 public letter to Kant as my starting point.

Rethinking the Relationship Between Reason, Language and Experience

In this thesis I examine how the legacy of the eighteenth century "linguistic turn" in German philosophy can contribute to advancing contemporary debates about the relationship between reason, language and experience. The thesis mobilises material which remains under-represented and under-appreciated in Anglophone philosophy in order to provide an alternative constellation of arguments and ideas which I contend has significant advantages over other much more familiar histories of philosophical debates around these topics. This constellation provides theoretical resources which can be used to provide a much more compelling account of how reason, language and experience

are related than other available accounts in contemporary Anglophone philosophy –
including the legacy of classic debates between rationalism and empiricism on the one
hand, and the legacy of the twentieth century linguistic turn in analytic philosophy on
the other.

What is reason? What is experience? And how are they related? In Anglophone
history of philosophy textbooks, debates about reason and experience are often related
with reference to epistemological disputes between rationalist philosophers who place
an emphasis on *a priori* structures of knowledge (such as Descartes) and empiricist
philosophers who focus on *a posteriori* knowledge derived through the senses (such as
Locke). Following rationalists like Descartes, the "light of reason" is modelled on
insights and innovations from mathematics and the physical sciences – and the task of
philosophy is to assist with the refinement of an *a priori* conceptual vocabulary through
which to improve our processes of deductive reasoning in order to provide a more
stable basis for human knowledge. Following empiricists like Locke, experience is
considered as a kind of epistemological input through which we can improve our
understanding of the world – and all knowledge is ultimately derived from the senses.
The pictures of reason and experience associated with these two traditions remain
influential in analytic philosophy today. For example, Christopher Norris argues these
epistemological disputes are currently being "rerun" in debates about "philosophical
methodology" in analytic philosophy – looking at whether philosophical inquiry should
be conducted by means of thought experiments from the armchair, or modelled on the
scientific methods of empirical experiments in the laboratory (Norris, 2013: 99).

Many of the thinkers which I examine in this thesis challenge these narrow conceptions of reason as a formal conceptual calculus and experience as raw empirical input – and propose that both reason and experience can be better understood by turning to language. However, the philosophical tradition that developed from the eighteenth century linguistic turn advances a different conception of language to that associated with the much better known linguistic turn in analytical philosophy in the twentieth century. Thinkers associated with the analytic linguistic turn looked to language in order to provide an account of rationality – both through the "ideal language" branch which aspired to create a universal metalanguage to unify the sciences, and through the "natural language" branch which sought to dissolve apparent philosophical problems by studying how philosophical language departs from how language is used in practice. Both of these branches follow in the footsteps of their rationalist and empiricist predecessors insofar as they continue to focus on what Charles Taylor characterises as the "designative" and "information encoding" dimensions of language as a transparent tool for argumentation and representation, at the expense of its other communicative capacities (Taylor, 2016).

By contrast to this "thin" conception of linguistic reason, the philosophical tradition which draws on the eighteenth century turn to language around the Berlin Academy articulates a broader and more compelling vision of language's capacities. In the works of Hamann and Herder, naturalistic and historical conceptions of language are combined with insights from Kant's transcendental philosophy in order to advance a conception of language as a living, evolving, socially constituted fabric of thought which provides the conditions of possibility for both rationality and experience. They place a much stronger emphasis on the aesthetic dimensions of language and experience

– arguing for the paradigmatic importance of poetic language in understanding linguistic innovation. They also advance a "broad expressivist" conception of language which suggests that a wider range of "meaningful media" are relevant to providing an account of our reasoning and communicative practices than the philosophers of "pure reason" propose. These ideas about the relationship between reason, language and experience are taken up and developed in different ways by thinkers associated with a wide variety of different German language philosophical traditions over the next two hundred years – from Early Romanticism in the late eighteenth century, to hermeneutics, phenomenology and critical theory in the twentieth century.

History, Philosophy and Hermeneutical Fictions

Why address these questions and concerns about the relationship between reason, language and experience with reference to philosophical traditions of the past? As I shall discuss further in later chapters, many of the thinkers in this thesis argue that it is not only advantageous but vital to appreciate the historical aspects of our philosophical concepts and the way they relate to each other. On this view, historical enquiry is a necessary precondition for philosophical reflection. Might this not be considered an instance of the genetic fallacy, such that we rely on the past to understand the present? Thinkers in the hermeneutical tradition examined in this thesis contend that we cannot so easily disentangle the ideas we use from their histories. This is because our outlook is *historically constituted* such that our language, our concepts, our ways of seeing the world are born out of institutions, practises and patterns of thinking which we cannot ever fully call our own (as I shall examine further in chapter seven, in relation to the works of Heidegger and Gadamer). We cannot but communicate in a language which is

given to us – which we can shape, influence and develop, but never totally reinvent. Only by appreciating the historical dimension of our ideas can we analyse and reflect on the linguistically mediated "world versions" that we inherit and inhabit, and through which we reason. This is the sense in which Schlegel contends that a "critique of philosophizing reason cannot succeed without a history of philosophy" (Frank, 2004: 13-14).

With this in mind, we might ask: What distinguishes a *philosophical* reading from a *historical* reading of philosophical texts from the past? One does not have to delve too deep into debates about the relationship between philosophy and its history before one encounters a dichotomy between philosophical and historical interpretation. According to this dichotomy we may interpret ideas in philosophical texts of the past as philosophers – reformulating, interrogating, and measuring these ideas against our own. Or we may interpret such ideas as historical scholars, focusing on the reception of a given philosopher's ideas amongst their contemporaries, agnostic as to whether or not these ideas are plausible, perhaps maintaining a principled silence about whether or not we agree with them. For example, Simon Blackburn writes in the *Times Higher Education*:

> Why does the history matter, to us, here, now? With characteristic insight, the late Bernard
> Williams made a distinction between the history of philosophy and the history of ideas. The
> former looks at great dead philosophers with an ear attuned to what they have to tell us, here and
> now; the latter looks at the contemporary matrix within which its subjects wrote and potentially
> highlights social and historical circumstances that have little or no echoes in the modern world.
> The two enterprises are not utterly distinct but, Williams thought, it is not possible simply to
> combine the virtues of both, any more than it is possible to have the Impressionist concentration

on the surface effects of light and at the same time a delineation of mass and structure as forceful as those that can be achieved by other means.

The vice of history of philosophy, especially according to historians of ideas, is anachronism. And the vice of history of ideas is antiquarianism. (Blackburn, 2007)

The archetypically historical interpreter is mainly (perhaps exclusively) concerned with a text insofar as it constitutes evidence of the views of its author and their times. They are more interested in what a philosophical author thought, rather than contemporary appraisals of what they thought. The archetypically philosophical interpreter, on the contrary, is only interested in a philosophical text insofar as it is of relevance to *their* philosophical ideas. Questions concerning biography, influence, context and so on are only relevant insofar as they alter contemporary philosophical readings of a text. The philosophical interpretation is one in which we deliberately bracket historical details in order to reveal a philosophically relevant kernel with which we can directly engage on our own terms, regardless of the intentions and circumstances implicated in the production of the text in question.

These two caricatures are the two banks between which interpreters of historical philosophical texts must navigate: the Scylla of antiquarianism and the Charybdis of anachronism. The two extremes are impossible positions to occupy. Toward Scylla, we are trapped in history, unable to speak to the present. The interpreter is confined to the historical particularities of a text and the concerns of its author. Toward Charybdis we are trapped in the present, unable to understand or relate to the past. The interpreter is doomed to deal with a reading of a historical text that is irremediably their own, of their own time, and about their own concerns.

Luckily, this model of interpretation is a fiction. Traffic along our hermeneutical river is thickest along the middle, and its extremities are *reductiones ad absurdum*, cautionary scenarios to encourage interpreters to alter the course of their interpretation towards one bank or the other, towards history or towards philosophy. The historical scholar may invoke the image of the purely philosophical interpreter to warn against anachronism (for example against reading and evaluating Descartes as though he were writing as a contemporary analytic philosopher). The philosopher may invoke the image of the purely historical interpreter to warn against antiquarianism (for example, against the view that Spinoza's context and concerns are so remote from our own, that his works have nothing to contribute to contemporary philosophical debate).

In the introduction to their volume on *Philosophy in History*, Richard Rorty, J. B. Schneewind and Quentin Skinner eschew this dichotomy between purely historical and purely philosophical interpretation as "two impossibly ideal types" (1984: 9) saying:

> An opposition between intellectual historians and historians of philosophy seems to us as factitious as would an opposition between scientists and engineers, or librarians and scholars, or rough-hewers and shapers. It is an appearance created by the attempt to be sententious about 'the nature of history' or 'the nature of philosophy' or both, treating 'history' and 'philosophy' as names of natural kinds – disciplines whose subject and purpose are familiar and uncontroversial. Such attempts produce red-faced snortings about how a given book 'isn't what I call history' or 'doesn't count as philosophy'. They take for granted that there is a well-known part of the world – the past – which is the domain of history, and another well-known part, usually thought of as a set of 'timeless problems', which is the domain of philosophy. (1984: 8)

They proceed to argue that if connecting the past to the present is anachronistic, then "every historian is always anachronistic" (1984: 10). A charge of anachronism can only

be levelled based on *how* we map past ideas and concerns to present ones, rather than *that* we do so, which is unavoidable for any kind of historical scholarship. Conversely, the historian of philosophy "cannot ignore intellectual history" and "nor, of course, does he ever do so for long" (1984: 10):

> No matter how philistine the historian of philosophy may want to be, he will need translations of what Spinoza wrote which will let him get a handle on the truth-value of Spinoza's sentences. This will require him to examine present translations critically to see whether they are infected with the philosophies of some intervening epoch, and eventually to work out his own translations. He will become a historical scholar and re-translator whether he wants to or not.

They introduce the guiding fiction of "The Intellectual History of Europe", which is outlined as follows:

> Imagine a thousand-volume work entitled The Intellectual History of Europe. Imagine also a great convocation of resurrected thinkers, at which every person mentioned in the pages of this work is given a copy and invited to begin by reading the passages concerning himself or herself, and then to read alternately backwards and forwards until he has mastered the full thousand volumes. An ideal work of this title would fulfil the following conditions:
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> 1. The person whose activities and writings are being described finds the description intelligible, except for the parenthetical remarks which say things like 'This was later to be known as ...' and 'Since the distinction between X and Y was yet to be drawn, A's use of "Z" cannot be interpreted as ...', and he comes to understand even these remarks as he reads on.
>
> 2. On finishing the book, everyone described endorses the description of himself as, though of course insufficiently detailed, at least reasonably accurate and sympathetic.
>
> 3. The entire assemblage of the resurrected, at the point at which they have all read through the book, are in as good a position to exchange views, to argue, to engage in collaborative inquiry on subjects of common interest, as secondary sources for their colleagues' works can make them.

> This seems a plausible ideal for intellectual history because we hope that such history will give
>
> us a sense of Europe as (in the phrase which Gadamer has adapted from Hölderin) 'the
>
> conversation which we are'. (1984: 1)

While this is clearly idealised to the point of impossibility, not least due to the "size of our brains and the span of our lives" (1984: 9), the "Intellectual History of Europe" picks out several important characteristics of the authors' conception of what it is to enquire into the history of ideas. They advance a Gadamerian hermeneutical conception of scholarship modelled on conversation, and the possibility (in principle) of transposing concerns from one historical period into those of another. They believe in the possibility of narrative continuity in intellectual history. They reject the notion that different sets of concerns are incommensurable, and that we must treat intellectual history as "a series of ethnographic reports" or "a miscellany of self-contained traditions" (1984: 2).

They contend that while the history of philosophy involves mapping historical concerns (more or less anachronistically) onto our own concerns, approaches to interpretation in Anglophone analytic philosophy have had a particularly pernicious influence on the study of philosophical texts of the past. They argue that contemporary analytic philosophers tend to draw a sharp line between the current set of concerns in philosophy (the set of questions which *really* matter and which *should be* the core focus of philosophical enquiry) and concerns that have previously been described as 'philosophical', but which with hindsight we may more accurately reclassify as religious, political, or aesthetic in nature. The authors express concern that the resulting picture of philosophy's history – after it has been appropriately filtered and mapped onto present concerns – is often bizarre and implausible.

While Rorty, Schneewind, Skinner's caution against overly anachronistic readings by contemporary analytic philosophers is a welcome corrective, there is, of course, a long tradition of philosophers' interpreting their predecessors to suit their purposes. Taking a longer view, perhaps the practice of aspiring to interpret the history of philosophy *apart* from our current philosophical interests is more unusual. It is entirely plausible that the polemical character of Nietzsche's invocation of Goethe in the former's *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life* – "I hate everything that merely instructs me without augmenting or directly invigorating my activity" (Nietzsche, 1983: 59) – might simply have been lost on philosophical interpreters of the past, for whom "knowledge for knowledge's sake" may have sounded more alien than "knowledge for the sake of life". In order to open up further space for reflecting on the aims of philosophical interpretations of historical texts, I will proceed with a brief discussion of two recurring hermeneutical tropes: the philosophical 'author' and the philosophical 'terrain'.

In his "What an Author Is", Alexander Nehemas argues that philosophers and critics may benefit from an analytical distinction between the 'author' and the historical person that created a given text (Nehemas, 1986). The author is something that comes into being upon the creation of a text, which necessarily exists in relation to it, and which is indispensable in discussion of it. Nehemas presents the author as a construct in relation to which we obtain knowledge that lies outside of the text, but which is nevertheless relevant to its interpretation. The author is *insofar as* the text is. This conceptual fission is perhaps also reminiscent of the existentialist theologian's attempt to derive from a reading of the gospels a "Jesus of History" and a "Christ of faith" – which is to say, the historical person whom is the focus and formal cause of the Christian tradition, and the

idealised figure whose life is to be interpreted *insofar as* it is relevant to the faith of the practicing Christian.[1] In a similar vein, philosophical writing is filled with authors, names and personages that seem to exist as pegs upon which to hang certain views, attitudes and arguments. In the Platonic dialogues we encounter famous names in the history of philosophy – Cratylus, Parmenides, Protagoras, Socrates himself – which are used to allude to and articulate schools of thought, and whose views we must assume are part apocryphal, part embellished, part fabricated. The dialogue *qua* literary form (as exemplified, for example, in the Platonic dialogues and works such as George Berkeley's *Three Dialogues* or Hume's *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*) has become a comparatively marginal specimen in contemporary philosophical writing. Yet the notion of a figure who holds certain *types* of views, and who would respond in such and such a way to question X, or hypothetical situation Y, remains of central importance in philosophical discourse. Indeed, one can imagine making the case that if an author cannot speak beyond the confines of what he or she actually said – if one cannot make meaningful assertions about what he or she would have said, or would say – then it is questionable whether they have a place in the history of philosophy, *qua philosopher*.

Perhaps we might imagine that upon the creation of a philosophical text, a philosophical author comes into being – just as a player comes into existence when a new person enters into a game. Unlike the mortal, historical person, the philosophical author lives on as long as there are people who are engaged in the practise of philosophy – just as a player might continue to be part of a game after the person who originally played them has left, as long as there is someone left at the table to continue

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[1] The distinction is said to have originated from Martin Kähler, and may be traced back to Lessing. Perhaps its most well known articulation is by the theologian Rudolph Bultmann, a colleague of Martin Heidegger.

to take their turns. In philosophy, these personas change as the game evolves. They acquire and discard labels as new ideas and distinctions arise and fall out of favour. Thinkers and their theories become positivist, realist, nominalist, dualist, cognitivist, descriptivist, consequentialist, materialist, pragmatist, and so forth. They posthumously acquire opponents, and unwittingly enter into shifting alliances. Their writings and documented utterances are shadows cast by an edifice of thought that remains in play, but which is not in plain sight. It remains for those who are playing – philosophers, historians of philosophy – to try to establish the contours, limits and implications of these edifices: to map and model them, and to calibrate these maps and models against the available evidence.

We can thus imagine that philosophical authors and texts of the past are given life within the practise of philosophy in a manner not unlike that in which legal texts and legal decisions of the past are given life within the practise of the law. Historical documents become resources in contemporary debates. But while the law has its life in legal institutions which work to promote, protect and punish different patterns of behaviour in society – what structures the activity of philosophers? *Prima facie* one cannot envisage a single, meaningful answer to this question any more than one can envisage a single, meaningful answer to the question to what end writers write, regardless of whether they are novelists or journalists, poets or publicists, critics or chefs. Philosophical writing has come to encompass a very wide and diverse variety of concerns. But nevertheless we may be forgiven for imagining that philosophical activity is grounded in and organised around a kind of philosophical 'terrain', which all philosophers and philosophical theories occupy – for this is often the way we speak. The position of a given philosopher within this space is also subject to change and

contestation, as is the question of whether or not one can meaningfully assign them coordinates along a given axis. Hence we find encyclopaedias and introductory textbooks in the history of philosophy – from Michelet to Russell, Brucker to Copleston, Windelband to Kenny – organising philosophers around movements, schools of thought, regions of consensus. Upon graduating into the game and making it into the textbooks, philosophers are characterised in terms that they may not have used to self-describe, and terms that they may not have even been familiar with. They are assigned sets of beliefs that they may not have known that they possessed: rationalisms, empiricisms, idealisms, materialisms, positivisms, and so on. Many philosophical careers have been devoted to arguing for the repositioning of a given thinker within this terrain, to eschewing the received interpretation that they fall under a certain "-ism" or that they anticipate a certain contemporary trend. Individual philosophers are assigned places within schools or subdomains – or as Kierkegaard writes of Hamann and Jacobi, "reduced to a paragraph in Michelet" (Kierkegaard, 1968).

These processes of re-interpretation and re-description in the history of philosophy take place within particular kinds of linguistic institutions. Philosophers and philosophies of the past are kept alive through linguistic institutions in which we unpack, translate, reconstitute, analyse, criticise and evaluate philosophical ideas, and give them a place in our own universe of concepts. These linguistic institutions also come with their own distinctive sets of hermeneutical norms, ideals and imaginaries. Whereas an intellectual historian may focus their interpretations of a text on the context and horizons of its, the historian of philosophy may rather focus on how historical texts sit within the current philosophical landscape: how texts of the past speak to us, and how they may inform our own philosophical activities. While there is clearly no *sharp*

distinction between the two – and indeed, there are many areas of significant overlap – nevertheless there is a meaningful spectrum of hermeneutical practices such that intellectual historians and historians of philosophy can have different areas of focus and genres of reading with respect to the interpretation of philosophical texts.

The current study is much more a history of philosophy than an intellectual history. It aims to explore the relationship between reason, language and experience through a series of snapshots from thinkers in the history of philosophy in the German tradition – and to look at how their ideas can inform our own. It does not attempt to evaluate documentary evidence for the transmission of certain ideas (where person X first encountered idea A), or for looking at influence or priority (whether there is a clear line of influence from person X to person Z, whether person X or person Y had idea A first). Rather it gives a comparative analysis of what several thinkers said about the relationship between the three concepts, based on the close reading of several key texts, and aims to show how these views are relevant to contemporary philosophical thought.

Finally, it is worth noting that many of the thinkers that we will examine in the following pages advance views about the question of how we, *qua* interpreters, should endeavour to read, understand and write about historical texts. This question starts to receive more systematic, theoretical attention towards the end of the eighteenth century, with the birth of modern hermeneutics. While this is not our main focus here, the present study delves into and draws upon the history of the philosophical hermeneutical tradition from Herder to Gadamer insofar as this is relevant to its core themes.

Beginning in the Middle: Hamann's 1759 Letter to Kant

Throughout the eighteenth century, ideas about the power and liberatory potential of reason swept across the world. The works of figures such as René Descartes, Gottfried Leibniz, John Locke, Isaac Newton, and Baruch Spinoza had an enormous influence on subsequent thinkers - catalysing the development of philosophical ideas and systems which could form the basis of new political institutions, new scientific theories, new moral codes, and new cultural values. This optimism was criticised by writers and philosophers who suggested that the narrow and mechanical conception of reason that was being advanced could not live up to its proponents' promises, and that, furthermore, an uncritical faith in reason could have dangerous consequences. Many of these critics counselled reflection on the nature of language and experience as a corrective to narrow forms of rationalism.

This thesis spans a two-hundred-year period spanning from the publication of Johann Georg Hamann's *Socratic Memorabilia* in 1759 through to Habermas's seminal work *The Theory of Communicative Action* in the 1980s. Before setting out, I will briefly address two questions: (i) why the *German* philosophical tradition? And (ii) why this particular period?

Lewis White Beck opens his *Early German Philosophy* with the question "Can there be, should there be, a history of German philosophy?" (Beck, 1996: 1). He proceeds to challenge many of the superficial justifications for embarking on a "national history of philosophy":

Within the history of European culture we see thoughts expressed in various languages by men from different parts of the Continent. But these components are hardly well-formed unities with sharp edges. None of them is comprehensible by itself. In every one of them, important men and ideas from another must be included. No history of English or German philosophy can be understood without Descartes; no history of French or German philosophy can be understood without Locke; no history of French thought can be understood without Leibniz. If we add to this caution the recollection that few countries are now geographically what they were five centuries ago and that up to three centuries ago most philosophical works were written in a single language and passed, more freely than they do now, from one part of Europe to another, a national history of philosophy may appear at best episodic, at worst arbitrary. Why not write a history of philosophy mentioning only men whose names begin with the letter "p"? (Beck, 1996: 2)

He continues:

After reading a vast amount of writings purporting to list the distinctive and peculiar traits of German philosophy, I must report that I have found no generalization to which many important exceptions cannot be found in a moment's reflection. Perhaps the notion of an ideal type or family resemblances may help us find the nongeographical meaning of "German philosophy". But my experience of attempts to do this is little more encouraging. (Beck, 1996: 3)

Beck argues that we cannot justify studying German philosophy, British philosophy, French philosophy, the philosophy of any other nation on the basis of defining, intrinsic properties that issue from something like the "national character". But he says that we can nevertheless fruitfully undertake a history of philosophy in a given region or period insofar as that helps us to delineate a particular set of concerns which we may wish to study.

Is Beck's analysis plausible? For our present purposes, he eschews a complacent acceptance of "national philosophy" – in this case German philosophy – as something natural or given. As discussed in the previous section, the contours which delineate a tradition, school or period are subject to ongoing renegotiation through hermeneutical work. Some groupings will appear more natural to us than others. Take the example of how to classify books on library shelves. Some disciplines appear more suited to geographical sub-classification than others. For example, "French Literature" is less likely to raise eyebrows than "French biology" or "North American astrophysics". Perhaps "German Philosophy" is somewhere in between. In the context of a library or on an undergraduate course syllabus, we would know what is meant. The more contentious question is whether a book by a German philosopher should be filed under philosophy, or under German history or German studies – whether a course should be structured according to topic, or geographical region. The answer that we give here is likely to depend on the context. We may be talking about an internationally influential figure, and we may wish to argue that they belong to "philosophy" as a two-and-a-half-thousand-year old discipline that transcends national boundaries, rather than to the bit of space and time they happened to occupy. Conversely we may argue that a thinker does *not* make significant contributions to the discipline – and thus we should consider them in relation to the bit of space and time they happened to occupy.

Beck's point is that – generally speaking – philosophy's historical tributaries are too messily entangled to neatly subdivide the whole into national strands. National philosophical categories are more viable if we are speaking of *specific* episodes or concerns. For precisely this reason "French biology" doesn't look so alien in the context of a book title like *The Cuvier-Geoffroy Debate: French Biology in the Decades Before*

Darwin. Beck is also challenging the *image* of German philosophy that has been put forward by its proponents and by its critics – from Hegel to Nietzsche. There is no immutable, mysterious force called "the German spirit", Beck says. All we have are a disparate collection of people, scattered in space and time, responding to their own circumstances, united only by language and historical accidents related to what a patch of soil happens to be called at a certain point in time. Against Hegel's unified cathedral of the spirit, Beck argues for a cacophonous amalgamation, with patches of overlapping resemblances and repeating patterns (Beck, 1996: 5). His own study of German philosophers from Albertus Magnus to Kant is parasitic upon a historical narrative about "interests and conflicts in politics, society, religion, literature and art" at different historical periods, rather than looking at how philosophy in Germany unfolds purely on the basis of its own "native" conceptual resources.

Having mentioned the core topics of this thesis above, I will briefly outline its main cast of thinkers – which can be construed as part of an evolving philosophical conversation. I take Hamann's *Socratic Memorabilia* as my point of departure: an open letter in which he rejects the rationalistic philosophies of his contemporaries. In order to understand what he is reacting against, in chapter two I look at the genesis of ideas and arguments about pure reason in German philosophy – in particular focusing on the works of Leibniz, Wolff, Kant and Frege. In chapter three I compare Hamann, Herder and Kant's views on the limits of reason. In chapter four I look at figures associated with the analytic linguistic turn – particularly focusing on Carnap and Wittgenstein – in order to contrast it with the turn to language in the eighteenth century, which is the subject of chapter five, where I turn back to Hamann and Herder. In chapter six, I examine how elements of Hamann, Herder and Kant's ideas are absorbed into and

surface in romantic philosophy, including in the works of Schleiermacher, Schlegel and Novalis – as well as by Nietzsche in the nineteenth century. In chapter seven I look at what Heidegger and Gadamer do with some of these ideas and themes in their respective philosophical works. In chapter eight I examine the debates between Gadamer and Habermas about the extent to which we shape and are shaped by linguistic tradition.

The thesis aims to animate these concerns into a philosophical conversation which is relevant to contemporary debates. Of all the thinkers and works we will look at, there are arguably only three which are widely known in Anglophone philosophy departments: Kant, Nietzsche and Wittgenstein. Generally, these three are regarded as isolates. One of my aims is to give a broader view of the tradition of which they are part – building on the work of those such as Lewis White Beck, Frederick Beiser, Isaiah Berlin, Andrew Bowie, Michael Forster, Richard Rorty, Ian Hacking and Charles Taylor. Following these scholars, a broader aim of the present study will be, in Forster's words, to "encourage other philosophers to venture into this extraordinarily rich and underdeveloped territory" (Forster, 2010: 4).

I have chosen the metaphor of the "fabric of thought" in order to characterise a conception of language that develops from a "linguistic turn" in the eighteenth century, precipitated by debates about language around the Berlin Academy. Informed by the historical and naturalistic tendencies of the German enlightenment, it presents a "thick" view of language as that which enables reason, which gives form to experience and which is fundamentally interwoven into the practices, institutions and outlooks – or what Wittgenstein will later call the "forms of life" – of a society. This conception is

initially formulated by Hamann and Herder, and further elaborated by a range of other thinkers in the nineteenth and twentieth century, as I examine in chapters three, five, six and seven. In my reading, this conception of language as a fabric of thought is contrasted with philosophical projects which advance a "thin" conception of language as a predominantly a tool for the representation and the communication of information.

The metaphor of language as a *fabric* of thought has been selected to contrast with conceptions which present it, for example, as a *system* for reasoning, or as an *instrument* for designation and encoding information– at the expense of its other capacities. The English term "fabric" descends from the French *fabrique* which originally meant "thing made", which in turn came from the Latin *fabrica* meaning "trade" or "art" and *faber* meaning "artisan". This is the sense in which a fabric is *fabricated*, or created by people as a kind of cultural artefact. This resonates with Hamann and Herder's focus on poetry as a paradigmatic form of language. The Early German Romantics, Gadamer and Heidegger all examine the cultural capacities of language – as opposed to exclusively focusing on its semantic qualities from which a formal philosophical language or metalanguage could be derived. As such language helps to articulate and create new possibilities for experience – such as when we coin terms for new moods, shades of expression, or ways of being (such as Taylor's examples of "cool" and "standoffishness"). While the fabric metaphor draws attention to the *materiality* and *composition* of language (what language is made of), in doing so it is intended to be broad enough to accommodate both the systematic, architectural ambitions of those wishing to refine languages suitable for specialised scientific and technical tasks, as well as the Heideggerian sensibility for dwelling in language through poetic expression.

Many of the thinkers that I shall examine in the chapters below are keenly aware of the contingent and heterogeneous composition of language and the manifold contexts in which it is instituted as part of social worlds which stand in need of philosophical investigation rather than philosophical purification. The fabric metaphor is intended to allude to the *social* and *intersubjective* dimensions of language as a *collective* fabric of thought. This is the sense in which we may speak of the "fabric of society" or the "social fabric". Hence Richard Palmer writes of Gadamer's conception of language as a "fabric of shared understandings" and a "fabric and living medium of our life together" (Gadamer, 2007: 80, 357).

I will conclude this introductory chapter with a brief note on the starting point for the thesis. *Socratic Memorabilia* is one of earliest published works of Johann Georg Hamann, and represents the start of his philosophical authorship (insofar as we can call him a philosopher). It is addressed to two of his friends who were leading proponents of the *Aufklärung*, the German Enlightenment: the philosopher Immanuel Kant and the businessman Christoph Berens. It is essentially a tract against the disproportionate focus on "pure reason" in philosophy, at the expense of other capacities. From the outset Hamann challenges philosophical claims to universality, dedicating the work to "no one, the well known" – i.e. the "general public" apart from any particular person or group of people, an abstraction which does not literally exist – as well as "the two" specific people he is addressing, Kant and Berens (Hamann, 1967: 138, 143). He makes it clear from the outset that while he hopes these two addressees will find "a microscopically tiny forest" of meaning in the ensuing text, the "ordinary reader" may find "only mould" (Hamann, 1967: 143).

The text revolves around a discussion of the character of Socrates. It is, Hamann says, a Socratic interrogation of the figure of Socrates – a kind of literary dialogue in which he aims to show the limits of the knowledge of his interlocutors. In particular, he challenges the figure of Socrates as a symbol for the success of rational dialectic, narrowly conceived. Instead, he contends, what makes Socrates truly wise is that he recognises the *limits* of human reason and human knowledge. Hence Hamann rewrites Socrates as a champion of intellectual humility – one who is modest about his faculties and abilities and recognises his finitude. He knows that he is a man who "knows nothing" and "has nothing" (Hamann, 1967: 161). Reacting to the way in which Socrates has been appropriated for the cause of philosophical rationalism and for the project of human knowledge, Hamann portrays him as a forerunner of his own pietism. It is this awareness of his ignorance which, according to Hamann, also makes Socrates so receptive to experience of the world around him – and what gives Socrates a worldliness which is opposed to the other-worldliness of the philosophy of Plato and Hamann's rationalistic philosophical contemporaries.

Hamann presents us with a portrait of the physical person of Socrates in Athens, the son of a midwife and a sculptor. Hamann's language paints a vivid portrait of Socrates, and the texture of his prose stands in stark contrast to Kant's abstract, schematic texts. Hamann compares these two communicative modes with the difference between an animal and its skeleton (Hamann, 1967: 167), arguing that we should admire Socrates precisely because he spends his time grappling with language in the midst of life – in fields, markets, schools, streets and prisons – rather than because of his capacity for abstract philosophical reflection. Even though they may think they are operating in some other unworldly realm, philosophers are ultimately much more like artists,

musicians and poet than they recognise. Through this rereading of Socrates, Hamann seeks to turn Kant and Berens away from a narrow philosophical interest in the "purification" reason, and to render them more sensitive and attentive to different ways of knowing, experiencing and making sense in the world. In order to become more attuned to these different registers of dealing with the world, philosophers will have to obtain a renewed appreciation of the central role of language in human understanding and experience.

In the next chapter I will look in more detail at some of the main features of the philosophies of pure reason that Hamann was reacting against – with a particular focus on the reception of Aristotle, Leibniz and Wolff – as well as how this aspiration to purify reason has later gained traction in the analytic philosophical tradition, including in the works of Frege and Russell.

2. The Purification of Reason: Leibniz to Frege

"The only way to rectify our reasonings is to make them as tangible as those of the Mathematicians, so that we can find our error at a glance, and when there are disputes among persons, we can simply say: Let us calculate, without further ado, to see who is right." – Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1951: 51)

This chapter outlines some of the principle features of philosophical projects to purify reason in German philosophy. It commences with a brief "prehistory of pure reason" looking at the reception of Aristotle and debates about reason in theology. It then looks at Leibniz and Wolff's aspirations for a calculus of thought modelled on developments in mathematics, logic and methods from the natural sciences. Finally, it looks at the legacy of their views and how they served as a source of inspiration for later conceptions of rationality which aspire to distil a conceptual metalanguage in order to improve how we reason. In particular, I look at how this tradition came to inform the works of Kant (whose critique of pure reason was both drawn upon and challenged by Hamann and Herder) as well as Frege, Russell and the tradition of analytic philosophy which drew on their work.

The Prehistory of Pure Reason

What exactly was Hamann reacting to in his 1759 letter? To which kinds of philosophical claims about the promise, potential and power of reason is he objecting?

While Hamann's critique is immediately addressed to Kant and Berens, his work discusses ideas which have a much longer history. In order to understand the conception of "pure reason" in German philosophy of which Hamann is critical, I shall give a brief account of where it comes from with reference to: (i) the reception of classical philosophy (in particular Aristotle) amongst German thinkers, and (ii) debates about the role of reason and rationality in theology and how these anticipate later debates in philosophy. Many of the themes and tensions implicated in these controversies around the purification of reason will set the scene for discussion in the chapters below.

In Aristotle we find a conception of reason which is recognisably similar to that against which Hamann is reacting. In Europe Aristotle was predominantly known as a logician from works imported from Italy, until the influx of Arabic translations and commentaries in the 12th century. While his writings on various aspects of science and logic were welcomed, his *Metaphysics* and *Physics* were condemned and banned by various religious authorities in the early 13th century. The extent to which aspects of the Aristotelian worldview could be integrated with Christian doctrine was fiercely disputed in the thirteenth century, and there were several attempts to produce an orthodox Christian Aristotelianism. While a sharp, explicit distinction between mystical and scholastic approaches in theology would not emerge until later – the question of the relative importance of faith and reason in theology became central around this time.

Albertus Magnus claims (perhaps unexpectedly for this period) that the devil tried to discourage him from studying Aristotle. He was one of the first thinkers in Germany – indeed in Europe – to be able to read and interpret Aristotle's entire corpus. He believes that reason is limited in the extent to which it can help theologians to apprehend,

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understand and unpack the mysteries of the cross. Up to this limit, one can draw on secular sources – such as Aristotle – to exercise reason in relation to worldly matters. Beyond this limit, one has to turn to other sources, such as faith and tradition. He suggests that reason is not natural (of the world), but rather God-given. Its exercise is dependent on the grace of God – in the same way that the light of the moon depends on the light of the sun. Thus Albert Magnus builds on Aristotle in a way which avoids two dangerous options: the heresies of Averroism (where there are alleged to be two distinct and possibly incompatible sources of truth – the worldly and the divine), or using reason to attempt to shoehorn Christianity alongside heresies (such as those found in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*) into a single system.

In the fourteenth century we see a further divergence of theological approaches which: (i) draw on philosophical reason to explore matters of faith, and (ii) emphasise reason's limits and turn to other means. The century witnesses the speculative mysticism of thinkers such as Meister Eckart and Nicholas of Cusa. Both of these thinkers are heavily influenced by the Neoplatonist thought, in particular in their belief that the world *emanates from* God, rather than simply being created and left alone. While for both of them the process of plunging oneself into the mysteries of divinity is still presented as an *intellectual* process (in the sense that they use rational argument as opposed to focusing on music, meditation, ritual or fasting) they nevertheless both emphasise the limits of the human intellect and of human reasoning. Eckart emphasises the finitude and fallenness of being, as opposed to the pure intellect of the divine. Nicholas of Cusa writes of "learned ignorance" as a way of coming to terms with the fundamental inadequacy of human understanding. "The door of Paradise is guarded by the most proud Spirit of Reason", Nicholas writes, "and unless he be vanquished, the

way will not lie open" (Beck, 1996: 59). They both have pantheistic leanings, but avoid outright pantheism by asserting a Neoplatonic distinction between the primary reality of God and the subordinate unreality of the world. Directly and indirectly they both had an influence on later thinkers in the German philosophical tradition under examination in this thesis (e.g. Schelling read and was inspired by Nicholas of Cusa).

In the sixteenth century, theologian and church reformer Martin Luther – who says reason is "the devil's whore" and Aristotle a "damned, arrogant, pagan rascal" – has a profound influence on the course of German thought. Many of the themes of his thought echo into Germany cultural and intellectual life in the centuries that followed him – from his stand against the papacy in Rome and confrontation of the institution of indulgences, to his translation of the Bible into the vernacular and his insistence of the primacy of the faith of the believer and the word of God over human reason and worldly institutions. Language – and particularly the language of God as revealed to humankind in the Bible – is central in Luther's conception of human understanding. His "Theology of the Cross" emphasises the fallenness of human reason and the imperfection of human institutions, contending that our guiding light in matters of the understanding God and the world should be the cross and the crucifixion. While he accepts the importance of reason for secular learning (in particular Aristotle's works on logic and rhetoric), he has little time or patience for reason in relation to matters of religion or salvation.

In his turn towards inner faith rather than external institutions, Luther is influenced by the *Devotio Moderna* – a fourteenth century lay movement responding to the perceived moral and spiritual failures of the clergy with a focus on inner devotion and meditation – as well as by the tradition of German mysticism. Later theological

tributaries drawing upon Luther's thought – such as Pietism – place an emphasis on faith, feeling and spiritual practice, over rational calculation, demonstration and enquiry. Though this turn away from reason and towards faith in the Lutheran tradition is hardly novel – for debates about natural and revealed theology precede Luther by centuries (and not just in the Christian tradition) – Lutheranism and associated forms of Protestantism arouse a new wave of thought about the limits of reason and worldly institutions in Germany. As Beck writes, in Luther's conception reason is "inherently, but not completely, corrupt" (Beck, 1996: 95).

The humanist Philipp Melanchthon seeks to introduce more systematic reflection into Lutheran thought. He shares many of Luther's suspicion of claims for the reach of reason in theology, but helps to revive philosophy in relation to secular learning, drawing on Aristotle. French theologian John Calvin also has an important role in the development of European theological and philosophical thought. Calvinist thinkers are less hostile towards secular reason and more interested in the organisation of knowledge than their Lutheran counterparts. For example, German Calvinist minister Johann Heinrich Alsted and his student Johann Heinrich Bisterfeld are interested in encyclopaedias, the art of memory, topical logic, and universal languages – partly influenced by their readings of French humanist and logician Petrus Ramus and Majorcan philosopher and logician Ramon Llull. Bisterfeld's work in this area is an influence on Leibniz, which we shall examine in more detail in the following section.

Today the sixteenth century is widely considered the era of Shakespeare and Cervantes, Marlowe and Montaigne, da Vinci and Dürer – renowned for innovations in cultural expression drawing on classical and Christian texts. The discoveries of figures

such as Copernicus and Columbus lead to dramatic transformations in how the world is seen, of its place in the universe, of its geographical makeup, and of its cultures that were previously unknown in the Europe. But it is the seventeenth century, the century widely held to mark the beginning of what we now call "modern philosophy", that brings a huge surge of interest in reason, observation, and method – catalysed by a wave of scientific discovery and invention – that is carried over from empirical investigation into other areas of social, cultural and political life. Later debates about the value and limits of reason echo theological currents and counter-currents from previous centuries about the relative importance of reason and revelation, faith and argument, justification and prayer – but it is in the seventeenth century that we see the rise of a philosophical interest in creating a *general* and *generalisable* rational metalanguage or method.

"Let us Calculate!"

As a young man Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz is fascinated by the idea of an *ars combinatoria* – an art of combinations – which would enable us to generate novel ideas and inventions, as well as to analyse and break down complex and difficult ideas into much more simple, manageable components. In 1666, when he is around twenty, he publishes *Dissertatio de arte combinatoria*, an extended version of his doctoral dissertation, which aims to explain and illustrate this notion, showing how the most complex ideas can be derived from a few simpler ones through the use of a set of rules and analytical techniques, and how these can be applied in a wide variety of different areas – such as logic, law, theology, physics, and music.

In his *Dissertatio*, Leibniz is inspired by Ramon Llull's *Ars magna* (or 'ultimate general art') from 1308, which outlines a form of analysis and argumentation based on working with different permutations of fundamental attributes. Leibniz develops an interest in Llull and the idea of an "alphabet of human thoughts" through a group called the Herborn Encyclopaedists – which includes Johann Heinrich Alsted and Johann Heinrich Bisterfeld, to whom I alluded earlier in this chapter (Brown, 1999: 4ff; Loemker, 1973: 276-297).

In his works, Llull aspires to create a universal tool for helping to convert people to the Christian faith through formal logical argumentation. He proposes eighteen fundamental general principles ("Goodness, Greatness, Eternity, Power, Wisdom, Will, Virtue, Truth, Glory, Difference, Concordance, Contrariety, Beginning, Middle, End, Majority, Equality and Minority"), accompanied by a set of definitions, rules, and figures in order to guide the process of argumentation, which is organised around different permutations of the principles. The art is used to generate and address questions such as "Is eternal goodness concordant?", "What does the difference of eternal concordance consist of?", or "Can goodness be great without concordance?".

Llull contends that the art, which he presents as the most general of all of the arts, enables the person who uses it to "banish all erroneous opinions" and to arrive at "true intellectual certitude removed from any doubt" (Llull, 2003). Llull's vision draw on the medieval Arabic *zairja* (Lohr, 1984), described by historian Ibn Khaldūn as "a branch of the science of letter magic … the technique of finding out answers from questions by means of connections existing between the letters of the expressions used in the question" (Khaldūn, 1958: 182). The *zairja* was an algorithmic process for calculating

truth on the basis of a finite number of elements (Link, 2010). Its practitioners would give advice or make predictions on the basis of interpretations of strings of letters that would result from the calculation.[2] This vision of reason based on calculation and combination was to inspire many later thinkers. As historian Frances Yates argues: "The European search for method … began with Ramon Lull" (Yates, 1982: 7).

Leibniz shares two key aspirations with Llull: the idea of fundamental conceptual 'primitives'; and the idea of a formal philosophical method (a combinatorial art) with which to calculate with them. The former enables us to reduce more complex ideas down simpler ones ("everything which exists or which can be thought must be compounded of parts", Leibniz, 1989: 80). The latter enable us to reason with these elements precisely and without error. As I shall explore further below and in chapter four, these two aspects of Llull's conception of rational argumentation are also reflected in the logical atomism and logical calculi of Frege and Russell. Llull and Leibniz both draw on a longer tradition of thought dedicated to these two aspects. Umberto Eco offers an account of attempts to create a language of fundamental concepts (Eco, 1995). As discussed in the previous section, the idea of a formal, rational method for argumentation is partly the result of the widespread influence of Aristotle amongst scholars, teachers and theologians. Leibniz says that he is closer to Aristotle than to Descartes, as the latter "abandoned his strict method" (Leibniz, 1989: 94).

Leibniz's teacher Erhard Weigel presents mathematics as the main model for human thought and placed a great emphasis on the notion of *rechnen*: reckoning or calculation

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[2] Some have pointed out that this would have been easier in Semitic languages than in European languages, which depend on vowels for strings of letters to make meaningful words or syllables. See Link, 2010: 259.

(Beck, 1996: 196; Mercer, 1999: 19ff). His teacher Jakob Thomasius nurtures Leibniz's interests in Aristotle and in reconciling ancient philosophy with the new "reformed" philosophy inspired by the explosion of mechanical physical theory in the early seventeenth century. Leibniz is also familiar with the works of Joachim Jungius, whose *Noematica* influences Leibniz's *Dissertatio*; Joseph Clauberg, a Cartesian who wants to develop German as a language suitable for philosophy; and von Tschirnhaus, a mathematician and philosophical rationalist who wishes to apply mathematical methods to our empirical knowledge. And he is well acquainted with the works of Thomas Hobbes, whom Leibniz writes to in 1670, full of praise for the elder philosopher (Leibniz, 1989: 105). In the first part of his *Elements of Philosophy*, Hobbes presents a vision of philosophy as "true ratiocination", where reasoning is considered to be a fundamental mathematical operation, consisting in "addition" and "substraction". "By ratiocination, I mean *computation*", he writes (Hobbes, 1839: 4ff). Leibniz's encounter with Robert Boyle in 1673 inspires him to pursue what he called "a science of the mind through geometrical demonstrations" (Loemker, 1995: 25). But what Leibniz does with these ideas establishes him as one of Germany's greatest philosophers.

Leibniz's work helps to establish logic and mathematics as the definitive paradigms for philosophical rationality to emulate. As a mathematician he is responsible for significant innovations such as a new system of mathematical notation (which is still in use today), refinements to the binary number system, several new designs for mechanical calculating machines, and his own infinitesimal calculus, independent of Isaac Newton's. The question of who discovered the calculus first and whether or not Leibniz had plagiarised Newton's discovery taints the reception of Leibniz in Britain

and Newton in Germany for decades to come. Lewis White Beck writes on the reception of Newton:

> .. the eighteenth century as a state of mind began in any country when the leaven of Newton was brought to it; for, depending upon the local ingredients with which it was mixed, it produced those characteristic doctrines of empiricism, deism, materialism, atheism, skepticism, utilitarianism, naturalism, and Kantian criticism which constitute the main body of thought of the century. (Beck, 1966: 5)

While Newton's discoveries mainly pertain to understanding and predicting the physical world, philosophers across Europe and around the world are quickly keen to apply his methods to other areas of thought. For example, John Locke describes himself as an "under-labourer" to "the incomparable Mr. Newton" and David Hume subtitles his first work "An Attempt to Introduce the Experimental Method of Reasoning into Moral Subjects" (Beck, 1966: 4-5). However, Newton's reception in Germany is said to be "hesitant and slow" (Israel, 2001: 523, 557), with his ideas not receiving widespread recognition, uptake or critical treatment in Germany until at least the mid eighteenth century, several generations after the first publication of his *Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica* in 1687.[3] Hence in Germany it is predominantly Leibniz's ideas that helped to popularise and foment interest in the project of applying scientific methods across the whole of human life and thought. Conversely, Leibniz does not receive serious consideration in Anglophone scholarship until after the middle of the nineteenth century (Beck, 1996: 200; Brown and Pheminster, 2007: 12-16).

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[3] Lewis White Beck and Jonathan Israel place the upturn of Newton's influence in Germany around 1740, as a result of Leonhard Euler and others in the Berlin Academy of Sciences (Israel, 2001: 523, 557; Beck, 1996: 200). Thomas Ahnert contends that it is not until the decades following the 1750s that Newtonianism begins to become more fashionable and considered a fully fledged philosophical system (Ahnert, 2004: 471-491).

Leibniz wishes to overcome the limitations of ordinary language by creating a formal language for philosophical argumentation, such that everyone will be able to agree on what fundamental concepts there are and which predicates apply to them, as well as on a mechanical process for calculating with these concepts. Leibniz's desire to eradicate ambiguity and aspire towards clarity and precision can also be seen in the context of his utopian social, political and religious interests – such as attaining universal peace, and reunifying the churches (to understand these concerns, one need only remember that the Thirty Years War, which ended just after Leibniz's birth, and which devastated and bankrupted many of the countries that were involved – including many of the German states). In his *Ars Combinatoria*, one of the few of his philosophical works that was published during his lifetime, he explicitly mentions the contribution his proposed art might make towards a universal language:

> […] this universal writing will be as easy as it is common, and will be capable of being read without any dictionary; at the same time a fundamental knowledge of all things will be obtained. The whole of such a writing will be made of geometrical figures, as it were, and of a kind of pictures – just as the ancient Egyptians did, and the Chinese do today. (Leibniz, 1966: 11)

In a letter from 1671-72 to his first Hanoverian Patron, Duke Johann Friedrich, he writes of the art:

> In philosophy, I have found a means of accomplishing in all the sciences what Descartes and others have done in arithmetic and geometry through algebra and analysis, by the art of combinations, which Lullius and Father Kircher indeed cultivate, although without having seen further into some of its secrets. By this means, all composite notions in the whole world are reduced to a few simple ones as their alphabet; and by an ordered method, all things with their

theorems and whatever it is possible to investigate concerning them. (Gerhardt, 1875-90: 57-58; cited in Rutherford, 1995: 257)

This interest in creating a universal language, an alphabet of pure thought that will overcome the defects of ordinary language stays with Leibniz throughout his life. In his *New Essays on Human Understanding*, which were drafted in 1704-5 in response to John Locke's 1690 *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, he comments on and discusses Locke's reflections on the imperfection and abuses of language, his distinction between the "civil" and "philosophical" uses of language, and his claim that while philosophers aspire towards precision and certainty, civil discourse is rife with "doubtfulness", "imperfection" and "controversy" (Leibniz, 1996: 335). Leibniz cites Locke's remark that:

> But I am apt to imagine, that, were the imperfections of language, as the instrument of knowledge, more thoroughly weighed, a great many of the controversies that make such a noise in the world, would of themselves cease; and the way to knowledge, and perhaps peace too, lie a great deal opener than it does (Leibniz, 1996: 339).

To this end Leibniz adds that he hopes that "men would agree on certain rules" and that "changes in language" could help to resolve disputes, along the lines of his earlier work (Leibniz, 1996: 339). The idea of a *characteristica universalis*, or a "universal characteristic" recurs throughout Leibniz's works. While there has been some debate about whether Leibniz in his later philosophical works intends this to be a means to achieving local formalisation for specific purposes or a fully blown universal formal language, it is clear that it is many elements of it are present in his *De arte combinatoria* (see Rutherford, 1995: 226). In a letter to Johann Friedrich from 1679 he describes the

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characteristica as "the great instrument of reason, which will carry the forces of the mind further than the microscope has carried those of sight" (231).

Leibniz's 1679 "On the General Characteristic" (eighty years before Hamann's *Socratic Memorabilia*) argues that "there is nothing which is not subordinate to number" (Leibniz, 1989: 221). He sketches the project for "a kind of alphabet of human thoughts" from the *De Arte Combinatoria* of his youth, saying that the grammar and a dictionary of the most frequent cases of "this wonderful language" could be completed by a few people in five years (224). Leibniz contends that "reason will be right beyond all doubt only where it is everywhere as clear and certain as only arithmetic has been until now" (224). Through his characteristic, "there will be an end to that burdensome raising of objections", and the deadlocking of debate which usually results in opponents resorting to emotion or violence means rather than reason, as they find themselves unable to "work out the entire table of pros and cons in any deliberation" or to dispassionately enumerate and weigh up expediencies and inexpediencies (224).

Leibniz spares no justification in advancing this project in his works, which sometimes read as if they were philosophical sales pitches (and there is little doubt that some of these early writings were indeed effectively intended to "sell" the proposal to prospective benefactors). The universal calculus is presented as being the world's most powerful instrument, an end to all argument, one of humanities most wonderful inventions (fulfilling a timeless dream shared in some form by everyone from the Pythagoreans to the Cartesians); the ultimate source of answers to some of the world's most complex and difficult theological, moral, legal or scientific questions; and a foolproof means to converting people to Christianity and propagating the faith, amongst

other things. In support of his project he argues that "no man who is not a prophet or a prince can ever undertake anything of greater good to mankind or more fitting for the divine glory" and that "nothing could be proposed that would be more important for the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith" (225, 262).

In his "On Universal Synthesis and Analysis, or the Art of Discovery and Judgement", also believed to have been written in 1679, Leibniz discusses Athanasius Kircher's recent work on the art of combinations, and his thoughts on how to ensure that the concepts used in the art are distinct rather than confused, primary rather than secondary, and fundamental rather than derivative. Here again, his paradigm examples are of "nominal definitions" ("the enumeration of signs or elements sufficient to distinguish the thing defined from everything else") of mathematical concepts, and the discussion revolves around things like Euclid's definition of a circle, curves, ellipses, cones, cylinders, and sections (230). Ultimately he hopes that the combination of a perspicuous thought language of "pure" concepts, combined with formalised processes and methods for reasoning, akin to those used in mathematics, would lead to the *mechanisation* of thought (for which he had numerous prototypes of various calculating machines, forerunners of modern calculators and computers). By means of new rational languages and methods, our ordinary and imperfect ways of reasoning with words and ideas would give way to a formal, symbolic, rule-governed science of reasoning: a calculus of purified thought. Disputes, conflict and grievances arising from ill-formed opinions, emotional hunches, biases, prejudices and misunderstandings would give way to consensus and agreement, peace and progress.

There are few contenders in the history of philosophy to rival the optimism that Leibniz had for the *characteristica universalis* as a kind of panacea to solve many of the world's problems. The idea of the project never left him. In a 1714 letter, two years before his death, he laments that he was unable to make more progress on it:

> I should venture to add that if I had been less distracted, or if I were younger or had talented young men to help me, I should still hope to create a kind of *spécieuse générale*, in which all truths of reason would be reduced to a kind of calculus. At the same time this could be a kind of universal language or writing, though infinitely different from all such languages which have thus far been proposed, for the characters and the words themselves would give directions to reason, and the errors (except those of fact) would be only mistakes in calculation. It would be very difficult to form or invent this language or characteristic but very easy to learn it without any difficulties. (Rutherford: 239)

While today Leibniz is widely considered to be one of the greatest German philosophers, relatively few of his writings were published during his lifetime. Aside from *De Arte Combinatoria*, he was mainly known in scholarly circles through occasional journal articles published between 1686 and his death in 1716 (Corr, 1975). It would not be until the middle of the eighteenth century when more substantive collections of his works began to be published (Wilson, 1995). In the early part of the eighteenth century, the philosopher Christian Wolff was far more influential than Leibniz.[4] It is more likely to be Wolff's rather than Leibniz's ideas which elicited such a strong reaction in the mid-eighteenth century. Hence, to finish setting the scene for this reaction (including Hamann's 1759 letter), we must look to the works of Wolff.

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[4] In addition to English translations of his philosophical works, a good overview of Wolff's reception in English and secondary literature on his thought from a wide variety of disciplines is contained in Senn (1997). See also Beck, 1996: 256-275.

While commentators in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries strongly identified Wolff's philosophy with Leibniz, contending that Wolff merely systematised Leibniz's philosophy to give something which was widely called the "Leibniz-Wolffian" philosophy, this reading has been subsequently challenged.[5] Born in 1679, Wolff is schooled in Catholic theology and philosophy in Breslau before moving to the University of Jena in 1699, where he becomes interested in applying mathematical methods to theological and philosophical argumentation, predominantly inspired by von Tschirnhaus, Descartes, Aristotle, Newton and their followers. Somewhat ironically given his later work, Wolff's first contact with Leibniz is through a mutual acquaintance who forwards Leibniz a copy of Wolff's dissertation which argued that the syllogism was *not* a means of discovering truth, a position which Wolff would soon come to completely reverse (Corr, 1975: 247).

This initial contact leads to a correspondence of over a hundred and twenty letters and three physical meetings, in 1706, 1713 and 1716 (Corr, 1975: 247). Leibniz seems to be largely unaware of Wolff's philosophical work (which was mainly published after the former's death in 1716), and Wolff seems to be only partially aware of depth and breadth of Leibniz's interests outside of the few things that he had published at that time. Nevertheless, there are significant commonalities between Leibniz and Wolff's thought in some areas, perhaps not purely attributable to the direct influence of the older man on the younger, but also because of common sources such as von Tschirnhaus, Aristotle, Descartes, and the mechanists. Wolff shares Leibniz's belief in the power of *a priori*, deductive reasoning, and of applying mathematical methods to many other areas

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[5] Charles Corr contends that Wilhelm Windelband and Eduard Zeller were a source of this identification in in 1870s and challenges this in Corr, 1975: 241. See also Beck, 1996: 257.

of thought. He also pursues a project to formalise our reasoning, which he sees as the central task of philosophy. At the heart of his project is syllogistic reasoning: a form of logical argumentation whereby a conclusion is inferred from two or more premises. Echoing Leibniz's sentiment that through his art disputes should be resolved through calculation (as per the call to "Let us calculate!" in the epigraph to this section), in his 1712 *Rational Thoughts on the Powers of the Human Understanding* Wolff writes:

> When the Meaning is determined, the Opponent sets about producing his Proof, and carries it on so far, till in his Syllogisms he comes to Premisses which are admitted by the Respondent. (Wolff, 2003: 211)

He also shares Leibniz's frustration with reasoning and argumentation in ordinary language and discourse:

> … in Disputations we require pure, formal Syllogisms, and reject the method of common Discourse. For whenever the Disputants begin to discourse or talk, they commonly go off from the purpose, and never come to a point. (Wolff, 2003: 212)

Much like Leibniz's "Principle of Sufficient Reason", Wolff believes that "nothing exists without a sufficient reason for why it exists rather than does not exist" (Wolff, 1730: §70). They both share a world in which everything is in principle cognisable and explicable, a universe with entities which essential, definite properties which can be identified, analysed and calculated with. They both propose that we inhabit a world with an essentially rational structure. Both the word of the creator and the nature of creation may be known through careful and systematic study: a combination of the enduring truths of reason (which it is the job of philosophy to clarify) and the facts presented to

us by experience. Wolff strives to integrate experience into his rational philosophy. He ultimately agrees with the scholastic maxim that there is "nothing is in the intellect that was not first in the senses".[6] Experience gives us the individual cases, through which we may arrive at knowledge of more general notions (Wolff, 2003: 108ff). General notions contain "nothing but from with they are abstracted" (34-36). He writes:

> We apply ourselves to gain general notions, in order thereby to extend the boundaries of our knowledge. For whatever is drawn from a general notion, agrees to all things contained under it: For example, to all right-lined triangles, whatever is deduced from the notion of a right-lined triangle; to all affections, what flows from the notion of an affection; to all fluids, everything that derives from the notion of a fluid, &c. (34)

Wolff sees philosophy as a "science of the possibles insofar as they can be", concerned with clarifying reason as an instrument for analysing, manipulating and weighing up possibilities, to be combined with history (which is concerned with facts) and empirical observation, in order to bring about practical value to people. Unlike the natural sciences which limit themselves to understanding and predicting physical phenomena, philosophy is general in nature, applicable to all areas of human thought, and hence superior to the new Newtonian philosophy. While the methods of philosophy might seem "childish" to people of experience (202), the discipline and patience they demand is necessary if we are to overcome dogma, prejudice and irrational authority, and progress towards truth.

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[6] This formulation is said to originate from Eustachius a Sancto Paulo, and a similar version appears in Thomas Aquinas (see Fowler, 1999: 93). Regarding Wolff's agreement with this view, see Beck, 1996: 268.

"More excellent a gift than the understanding, Heaven has not bestowed on man", Wolff writes, and the only way we can make the most of this gift is to learn to "form just conceptions of solidly demonstrated truths" (53-54). Throughout his works he is insistent on the practical utility of his philosophy. He says that it is imperative that philosophy exist to be "of service to persons in their several future stations and conditions in life", rather than being "matter idly to talk about in company", to "furnish subjects of dispute in schools" or "matter of wrangling and contention [for the] learned world" (66). As Beck puts it, Wolff sees philosophy as an "omnicompetent instrument of public enlightenment" (Beck, 1996: 261). His philosophy is far more systematic and pedagogical than Leibniz's which is fragmentary and sporadic in comparison to Wolff's hefty and thorough tomes. Ultimately it is this comprehensive and uncompromising insistence on the priority of logical and mathematical methods in all matters of the understanding that precipitates what was to become one of the greatest scandals of his time (Israel, 2001: 541-562).

From their first publication in the 1720s, Wolff's works are vociferously attacked by Pietist theologians at the University of Halle (where he taught), in a campaign led by theologian and philosopher Joachim Lange (Wilson, 1995: 450-452). His colleagues in Halle perceive Wolff as a threat to their faith – given his ability to pack lecture halls, command international attention, and revive the scholastic rationalism and natural theology that the Pietist movement is reacting against. His detractors accuse him of privileging logical and mathematical methods above faith and scripture on the path to an enlightened understanding and moral virtue. The Lutheran theologian and philosopher Johann Franz Buddeus attacks Wolff for seeking to "explain everything in a mechanistic way", meaning that people are not free to determine their destiny such that the divine

judgement of humanity is equivalent to our passing judgement on clocks who cannot do other than what their mechanisms determine (Israel, 2001: 546). The Pietists wish to revive a widespread religious movement that was based upon faith and feeling, scripture and experience, not upon dogma or demonstration, arguing that the zealously rationalistic philosophy of Wolff seeks to extend its domain too far into religion.

This fear is not altogether unfounded. While both Leibniz and Wolff adamantly reject the charge of atheism and Spinozism, they are indeed culpable of submitting religious doctrine to their logical and mathematical scrutiny. Wolff is intransigent in his application of his syllogistic method to scripture, miracles, and religious belief. Leibniz tries to give mathematical demonstrations for the Trinity and the significance of the Lord's Supper (Hagenbach, 1865: 8). In a farewell address to the university in 1721, Wolff lectures about the virtues of Chinese philosophy and ethics – in particular Confucianism – to an audience of over a thousand people, saying it is largely in agreement with his own moral principles, which fuels suspicion that he is fomenting atheism (Drechsler, 1997: 113). Pietist theologians at Halle suggest that Wolff's doctrine of predetermined harmony implies that deserting soldiers cannot be held responsible for their actions (Drechsler, 1997: 113-114). In May 1723 Wolff's philosophy is banned by all schools and universities under Prussian jurisdiction, and by November that year he is dismissed from Halle, and ordered to leave Prussia within forty-eight hours (see Drechsler, 1997: 114; Israel, 2001: 545). The incident boosts Wolff's fame and notoriety, catalysing debates about academic freedom and the extent of his impiety across the German states, and bringing questions about the power and limits of reason and rationalistic philosophy to the fore.

Wolff eventually returns to Halle in 1744, and is made Imperial Baron in 1745, but by this time the affair and its aftermath had deepened a fault line in German thought, polarising those who support and oppose Wolff, his methods and the imperial ban on his works. Another event which surfaces this growing rift is the publication of the "Wertheim Bible" in 1735, which attempts to give naturalistic, rational and logical explanations for everything supernatural and miraculous in the Hebrew Pentateuch (Israel, 2001: 552ff; Lifschitz, 2012: 50-52). In several places the word 'God' is substituted with phrases such as the 'divine will' or the 'autonomous entity' (Lifschitz, 2012: 50). Johann Lorenz Schmidt, the anonymous author of the edition, is a dedicated Wolffian, and Wolff's opponents did what they could to use this association to tarnish the latter's reputation. The French philosopher Pierre Louis Maupertuis, president of the Berlin Academy from 1746 until his death in 1759, is vehemently opposed to Wolff and his methods and publishes several essays that are highly critical of him (Lifschitz, 2012: 62; Wilson, 1995: 454ff). Despite this widespread opposition, ultimately Wolff's influence on German philosophy is enormous. He is dubbed the second *Praeceptor Germaniae* ("teacher of Germany"), doing for eighteenth century what Melanchthon did for the sixteenth: furnishing German philosophy with a new vocabulary and methods which came to play a central role in the way philosophy was institutionalised in the early eighteenth century.

The Legacy of Leibniz and Wolff from Kant to Frege

In the 1740s, though Wolff is still well established as a core part of the teaching of philosophy in Germany, his influence begins to wane (Reill, 1975: 30ff). The middle of the eighteenth century sees the start of a "Leibniz renaissance", catalysed by the

discovery and publication of many of his writings in the 1750s and 1760s (Jauernig, 2014: 298). Both thinkers come to play a significant role in the intellectual development of the Kant, who both draws on and reacts against both thinkers throughout his life. Leibniz becomes the single philosopher most cited by Kant, who later writes that his *Critique of Pure Reason* is "the true apology for Leibniz" (Jauernig, 2014: 289, 299). As we shall explore further in the next chapter Kant's *Critique* both aims to establish the limits of what philosophers may hope for from pure reason, as well as giving a more realistic appraisal of how reason functions and its relation to experience.

When he is sixteen Kant studies the philosophy of Leibniz and Wolff under the rationalist Martin Knutzen in Königsberg. Though the status of pietism is contested (due to significant opposition from orthodox political and religious authorities), Kant is well aware of the Pietist critiques of the Wolffian philosophy. Kant's parents are acquaintances of Franz Albert Schulz, a Pietist theologian and philosopher who studied under Wolff, who tried to effect a kind of *rapprochement* between Pietism and Wolffian rationalism (Kuehn, 2001: 37-40). Kant later studies under Schulz at the University of Königsberg, who urges the former to contact him if he ever wanted to become a preacher (Kuehn, 2001: 70-72). Later, when Kant begins to lecture in the mid 1750s, he uses Alexander Baumgarten's 1739 *Metaphysica* and Georg Friedrich Meier's 1752 *Auszug aus der Vernunftlehre* ('Extract from the Theory of Reason') as the core textbooks for his students. Baumgarten is a Leibnizian and a follower of Wolff and Meier is Baumgarten's student and also a Wolffian (Kuehn, 2001: 109). It is Kant's "pre-critical" philosophy from around this time that is one of the triggers for Hamann's *Socratic Memorabilia* in 1759.

While over the next several decades Kant investigates the limits of pure reason –
undertaking a critical examination of what reason can and cannot do in his 1781
Critique of Pure Reason (as we shall see in the next section) – he nevertheless continues
to confirm many of the assumptions and approaches of his rationalist forebears, albeit in
a highly qualified and more limited form. His *Critique* simultaneously serves to curb the
more extravagant claims of reason (particularly metaphysical claims) and to affirm and
give a sound epistemological footing to its more modest claims. He says that his
Critique should "really be only negative, serving not for the amplification but only for
the purification of our reason, and for keeping it free of errors" (Kant, 1998: 133). He is
still convinced of the paramount importance of pure reason in combatting dogma and
prejudice to prepare the path for knowledge, and his critical analysis serves to provide
philosophers with a manual for how to reason – including a more nuanced and
sophisticated account of the differences between the eternal truths of reason and the
facts of experience, distinguishing between propositions which are analytic and
synthetic, and *a priori* and *a posteriori*. Crucially, Kant moves away from the narrow
and mechanical conception of reason advanced by his rationalist predecessors and
suggests that reason cannot be understood apart from an analysis of the structure of how
human beings experience worlds – a move which is essential for Hamann and Herder's
subsequent linguistic metacritiques.

Kant's later work proposes that there is an unbridgeable gulf between the way the
world actually is and the way it appears to us, effecting a "transcendental" shift from the
investigation of the nature of the world (metaphysics) and of what there is (ontology) to
the investigation of how we know (epistemology) and how things appear to us.
Notwithstanding these radical departures from his predecessors, his new philosophy

contains several elements that we may recognise from Wolff and Leibniz. He divides his task in the *Critique* into the "doctrine of the elements" and the "doctrine of the method of pure reason", which is reminiscent of previous projects to distil a set of fundamental elements through conceptual analysis and the watertight logical apparatus or methodology through with we can reason with them. Through his 'transcendental deduction' Kant derives twelve fundamental 'categories' or concepts of the understanding – a process which Manfred Kuehn contends can be read against a background of Wolffian philosophy (Kuehn, 1997). His turn from the *content* of philosophical claims towards the *process* of arriving at such content also mirrors Leibniz's and Wolff's preoccupations with formalising reasoning processes – and he develops his own 'transcendental logic' as a contribution to this endeavour (Gabbay & Woods, 2004: 85-130). However, Kant's relationship with pure reason is certainly ambivalent, and his works are also a very important source for thinkers who were more critical of the idea of pure reason (which I shall examine in chapter five). On the one hand – as Hamann and Herder contend – Kant retains an interest in the purification of reason from experience and tradition in order to inform sound deliberation in philosophy. On the other hand, his *Critique* explicitly targets the rationalist dogmatic metaphysics of what he calls the "Leibnizian-Wolffian philosophy" and his transcendental aesthetic and transcendental analytic represent a ground-breaking shift in the understanding of reason from a focus on the specification of a formal calculus to an analysis of the conditions of possibility of worlds of experience. This shift will prove vital for Hamann and Herder's work, as well as for many of the thinkers drawing on the eighteenth century linguistic turn that I will examine later in this thesis.

Later in the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth century there is a broader shift amongst many German philosophers away from a picture of reason as calculation, and towards a richer and more historically grounded conception – under the influence of a succession of thinkers from Herder (who was taught by Kant) to Hegel, who has a profound influence on the direction of German philosophy. Logic continues to retain a special place in the speculative constructions of Fichte, Schelling and Hegel, who said its object was "pure knowledge" or "pure thought" (Sluga, 1980: 11).

Towards the middle of the nineteenth century controversies about the big claims of reason are replaced by controversies about the big claims of scientific materialism. Scientific and technological developments, industrialisation and urbanisation pose new challenges to philosophical views of the previous decades. As an antidote to the speculative excesses of Hegelianism, various forms of materialism and naturalism modelled closely on the physical sciences come to dominate – led by a new generation of thinkers such as Ludwig Feuerbach, Karl Vogt, Jakob Moleschott, Ludwig Büchner, Heinrich Czolbe and Ernst Haeckel (Sluga, 1980: 17). Hans Sluga claims that during the period between 1830 (Hegel died in 1831) and 1870 "philosophy was wholly on the defensive in German thought", and that one of the ways in which it was able to justify its broader societal utility and relevance after 1870 was through the "investigation of the logical structure of mathematics, science and language" (Sluga, 1980: 10).

The 1860s see a resurgence of interest in Kant's philosophy, leading to the emergence of what becomes known as "neo-Kantianism": one of the most influential developments in German philosophy for the rest of the nineteenth century (cf. Beiser, 2011). This resurgence of Kant is an important influence on Gottlob Frege, who plays

an important role in reanimating interest in pure reason in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Frege wishes to draw on the Kantian philosophical tradition in order to investigate and strengthen the foundations of mathematics (Sluga, 1980: 43). He shares Kant's sharp distinction between analytic and the synthetic propositions. Frege's work is also influenced by the Neo-Kantian philosopher Rudolf Hermann Lotze's work on logic, validity, and value theory (Sluga, 1980: 52-58). Husserl later says that he is indebted to Lotze, and Heidegger urges his students to read Lotze's *Logik*, calling it "the fundamental book [*Grundbuch*] of modern logic" (Sluga, 1980: 40, 53; Gabriel, 2002: 44). Lotze maintains that on the one hand all natural processes can be given a mechanical explanation, and on the other hand mechanical explanations stand in need of metaphysical foundations, broadly along the lines of the idealist tradition that was rejected by the century's dominant materialisms (Sluga, 1980: 27, 53; Gabriel, 2002: 39-51). Frege also reads Friedrich Adolf Trendelenburg, another philosopher who believes in the importance of philosophical traditions rejected by the new materialists – in particular Plato and Aristotle (Sluga, 1980: 49). In particular, Frege reads Trendelenburg's essay "On Leibniz's Project of a Universal Characteristic", which traces Leibniz's work on the *characteristica universalis* back to earlier work on universal languages by Llull, Kircher, Dalgarno and Wilkins. Frege draws upon this tradition in his own work to create a pure logical language, which – adopting Trendelenburg's term – he calls the *Begriffsschrift*, or "conceptual script" (Sluga, 1980: 49). Frege writes about Leibniz:

> Leibniz has strewn such an abundance of intellectual seeds in his writings that hardly anyone can measure up to him in this respect. Some of these seeds came to fruition in his own time and through his co-operation; others were forgotten but later rediscovered and further developed. That

justifies the expectation that much in his work that apparently lies dead and buried will one day

come back to life. Among these I reckon the idea of a *lingua characterica*. (Sluga, 1980: 60)

Frege's readings of Lotze and Trendelenburg, are predominantly orientated towards providing him with material that he can work into his own emerging conceptual architecture. His *Begriffsschrift*, published in 1879, is intended to help to overcome the ambiguities and impurities of natural language. Like Leibniz he recognises the wealth and indispensability of natural language, and yet also is frustrated by its imprecision which he desires to ameliorate with the assistance of a formal, logical supplement. "The business of the logician", he writes, "is a continuous fight against the psychological and, in part, against language and grammar" (Sluga, 1980: 64). His new concept language is intended to assist with the process of submitting inferential arguments to forensic scrutiny by determining the "objective conceptual content" of a given set of statements, translating this into the conceptual notation, performing the relevant calculation to check whether the inferential chain is logically watertight, and then interpreting the results back into ordinary language. Frege develops a sophisticated system of symbolic notation and writes extensively about how a wide variety of things we say – from ordinary utterances to complex mathematical propositions – can be resolved into a parsimonious and perspicuous new logical language.

While Frege's teacher Lotze writes at the end of his *Logik* that he hopes that philosophy will aspire to "understand the course of the world, and not merely to calculate it", it is precisely towards the latter that Frege's project is directed: to grasp the objective "propositional content" of our utterances and to calculate the validity of our inferences about them (Sluga, 1980: 73). In this sense he can be considered a

philosophical descendent of Llull and Leibniz's twofold aspiration towards logical primitives and a logical calculus. He is particularly interested in how to render the various argumentative expressions we have in ordinary language (like 'and', 'or', 'therefore', 'if … then', 'is', 'the') and mathematical concepts and functions ('+', '−', 'number', 'set', 'variable') into a bare minimum of logical operators. The purpose of this project is to determine how truth flows through the apparatus of argument. He also devotes himself to explaining how it is that the basic elements of this logical apparatus and the formulations generated from it relate to the world. His 1892 paper "On Sense and Reference", now considered a foundational text in the history of English language analytical philosophy, analyses proper names, descriptions and sentences in terms of their "reference" (what they refer to) and their "sense" (how they refer). He contends that for sentences, the "sense" is the thought they contain, and their "reference" is their 'truth-value', thus effectively making "striving for truth" the end of all meaning, the *telos* of his universal logical language (Sluga, 1980: 157-161).

In 1902 the English philosopher Bertrand Russell writes to Frege in order to clarify various aspects of the latter's work for a book on the *Principles of Mathematics*, enquiring about an apparently relatively minor contradiction he had found in Frege's system. This correspondence came to simultaneously challenge the foundations of Frege's logical project, and to secure his legacy and influence in an analytical tradition of philosophy that continues into the present day, from his own and Russell's logical works, to the works of thinkers such as Moore, Carnap, Wittgenstein, Ryle, Tarski, Popper, Quine, Austin, Grice, Davidson, Putnam, and many others. Many of the approaches and assumptions that we have examined in this section are still very much alive in this tradition, which dominates the way philosophy is taught in the English

speaking world – from the importance of formal conceptual analysis, to the idea that ordinary language stands in need of clarification through a logical language or metalanguage, to the notion of reasoning as a form of specialised calculation which aims to preserve the "flow of truth" from premises through to conclusions. The growth of interest in this picture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century led to another resurgence of interest in Leibniz, and the publication of some of his logical works which had previously not seen the light of day. In an article in *Mind* in 1902, Russell argues that Leibniz's logical work should be seen as the heart of his philosophy, claiming that his "metaphysic rests solely upon the principles of his Logic, and proceeds entirely from them" (Frankfurt, 1972: 366).[7] He later re-iterates and strives to substantiate this reading in his 1937 book on Leibniz.[8]

In this section, I have examined some of the main aspects of a conception of reason and its purification that still has traction in contemporary analytic philosophy. In this picture reason is considered to be a formal instrument for conceptual argumentation, which it is the job of the philosopher to purify and develop. To realise reason's potential, philosophers of pure reason must construct an apparatus of *a priori* axioms and principles which should be separated from the ambiguities and imprecision of our ordinary forms of communication. Human understanding can be more or less sharply divided into those things which are part of the apparatus of pure reason, and those things to which it must be applied: such as history, culture, language, morality, experience, the law, society, politics, the natural sciences, technology, and everything else. The philosopher must operate this apparatus of pure reason in the same way that

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[7] Russell says his interpretation is largely derived from M. Couturat's reading.
[8] He writes: "Leibniz's philosophy was almost entirely derived from his logic" (Russell, 1937: v).

scientists or engineers work with their own specialised technical languages. In this picture, philosophers *qua* philosophers should be more concerned with understanding the *form* rather than the *content* of our utterances. Like the mythical *zairja*, a well-constructed conceptual apparatus should help us to answer questions and guide our judgement on any topic, and the job of the philosopher should be simply to assemble and operate it.

In the next section I will examine critiques of this picture of reason – focusing on Hamann and Herder's metacritiques of Kant, and their articulation of an alternative picture in which language plays a central role. I will suggest that we should not forget or overlook the utopian Leibnizian seed – the promise of universal peace, emancipation and the advancement of humankind – which originally motivated many of the philosophers of pure reason. As I shall explore further in chapter seven, the challenge is how to retain rather than reject the promise of the universality of reason by formulating an alternative to the philosophical project of purification. As I shall explore in the next two chapters, language will play a central role in this alternative project, albeit a conception of language which significantly differs from that of the twentieth century linguistic turn in analytic philosophy.

3. The Limits of Pure Reason: Kant, Hamann, Herder

"Not only is the entire faculty of thought founded on language […] but language is also the centerpoint of reason's misunderstanding with itself" (Hamann, 2007: 211)

Having looked at the rise of pure reason in German philosophy, in this chapter I will compare Hamann, Herder and Kant's respective views about the limits of pure reason. From his *Socratic Memorabilia* onwards, Hamann portrays the philosophical project of purifying reason as myopic – overlooking many other ways of understanding and engaging with the world. Hamann and Herder contrast an impoverished conception of philosophical rationality with other historically situated and socially constituted sense-making practices. While they draw on elements of the British empiricist tradition against philosophical rationalism, they advance a richer conception of experience which is as much informed by debates in aesthetics, theology, philology and a Neoplatonist conception of emanationism as it is by the role of experience in scientific experimentation which is paradigmatic for Bacon, Locke and Hume. Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* also aims to highlight the limits of pure reason and is informed by various critical reactions to Wolffian philosophy's zeal for abstraction and formalisation – as well as aspiring to overcome the dichotomy between rationalism and empiricism through the transcendental analytic. However, in their respective "metacritiques" in response to Kant's *Critique*, Hamann and Herder argue that he remains committed to an overly abstract and ahistorical conceptual schema which is in fact dependent on language – as that which gives form to both rationality and experience.

Hamann and Herder on the Purification of Reason

As I have shown in the previous chapter, debates about the potential and limits of reason stretch back to before the beginnings of German language philosophy – from the controversy surrounding the reception of Aristotle, to theological debates about the source of truth in religion. When Hamann published his *Socratic Memorabilia* in 1759 he was writing against the background of decades of controversy between Wolffian rationalism and its Pietist opponents, and centuries of theological disputes about the comparative value of reason and revelation.

Why is this piece so important? The letter marks the beginning of the authorship of Hamann, one of most prominent opponents of the purification of reason of the period in question; and it is addressed to Kant, whose ideas about pure reason continue to exercise a profound influence on the practise of philosophy to this day – to the extent that Modern European Philosophy after this period is often simply described as "Post-Kantian". Many of the concerns raised in Hamann's letter have subsequently become central themes in European philosophy for the next two centuries: the limits of formal instrumental rationality and the corresponding turn towards other sources of meaning and understanding such as language, history, culture, experience and the body. While these themes were of broader intellectual interest to many Enlightenment thinkers around this time, they were often interested in analysing and exploring these topics from the perspective of philosophical reason. Hamann's move was to turn this around, arguing that the pure reason of philosophers should be considered subordinate to other ways of making sense. While Hamann's 1759 letter responds to Kant's thought from his "pre-critical" period – Hamann and Herder both draw extensively on Kant's critical work, in particular his transcendental analytic in his *Critique of Pure Reason*.

According to Hamann, proponents of the Leibnizian-Wolffian project to distil a conceptual meta-language possess a misplaced optimism in reasoning processes which possess far less power and utility than they believe. In the midst of their purification and *boiling down*, these philosophers risk underestimating other forms of understanding which may be far more valuable than they realise and upon which their formal reasoning processes in fact depend. As we shall examine further in chapter five, Hamann contends that it is ultimately language which is responsible for "reason's misunderstanding with itself" (Hamann, 2007: 211).

What does Hamann say about the limits of reason? As we briefly examined above, in his 1759 *Socratic Memorabilia* he challenges the portrayal of Socrates as a champion of pure reason and rational argumentation, instead suggesting that his wisdom lies in his apprehension of his mortality and his ignorance – which is in fact a kind of "sensibility" (Hamann, 1967: 167). This sensibility means that Socrates is able to be receptive to the world, language and experience:

> His philosophy was suitable for every place and every situation. The market, the field, a banquet, the prison were his schools, and whatever medley of human life and intercourse he happened to encounter served him as a place to sow the seed of truth. (Hamann, 1967: 177)

Hamann portrays Socrates as a sculptor, whose receptivity to the world informs his cultural craft, reshaping and working with a broad range of linguistic material. By contrast, the Athenians – his murderers – are associated with elaborate formality, theoretical artificiality and a zeal for abstraction. "Between sensibility and a theoretical proposition", Hamann writes "is a greater difference than between a living animal and its anatomical skeleton" (Hamann, 1967: 167). Hamann says that even the false idol of

"the public" that Kant and Berens proclaim to serve is an abstraction, which does not see or hear, which wants to know and judge everything, but learns and understands nothing (139). Hamann anticipates a range of thinkers who challenge the abstract conception of the public in favour of a more granular understanding of specific publics. This includes Kierkegaard, who was significantly influenced by the works of Hamann (cf. Hay, 2008; Gray, 2012), as well as Dewey, Lippmann and Habermas in the twentieth century (Dewey, 1922, 1954; Lippmann, 1993, 1998; Habermas, 1991).

Hamann suggests that Socrates's philosophical accomplishment resides in his ability to take the arguments of his interlocutors, and to use this material to interrogate their positions through *dialogue* – including through his use of rhetoric, metaphors, irony and analogy. Hamann himself aspires to do this throughout his works, using the terms of his contemporaries, but completely changing their context or meaning. This is his strategy for re-reading Socrates "in a Socratic way", for offering a "metacritical" perspective on Kant's critique, and for his sceptical reading of Hume. While philosophers are prone to *decontextualisation*, taking concepts out of the world and considering them in isolation, Hamann's pursues a strategy of *recontextualisation*, placing ideas back into their (previously forgotten) contexts. Hence, Hamann does not write for an abstract "general public", but rather for particular people: Kant and Berens. While philosophers may imagine themselves to operate in accordance with purified argumentative structures, they are in fact "just as subject to the law of imitation as the poet" (169), and they must deliberate with the same communicative repertoire as the rest of us – complete with its historical connotations and contingent associations with many different contexts in life. Thus, Hamann writes:

> Like numbers, words derive their value from the position which they occupy, and their concepts
>
> are, like coins, mutable in their definitions and relations, according to time and place. (163)

While philosophers can attempt to arbitrarily redefine linguistic terms, they cannot shed the broader associations that they accrue as a result of their usage in life, any more than they can escape their own limits as mortal, embodied creatures.

Hamann's insistence on the situated, embodied and intersubjective character of communication can be seen as a performative challenge to ideals of disembodied universality, impartiality, and timelessness. Does this mean that Hamann's works have little applicability outside of the particular situations he is addressing? On the contrary, Hamann's works contain several themes that persist over many decades and which continue to have a broader philosophical relevance today. His 1758 London writings have two main concerns – nature and scripture (both understood in a broad sense) – and in them he alludes to many of the ideas that will preoccupy him throughout his life: the primacy of the aesthetic modes of engaging with the world embodied in cultural expression (Betz, 2008: 59), the aesthetic and spiritual dimensions of experience (54), the limitations of overly narrow conceptions of reason (47), and – following the biblical notion that "we know in part" (I Corinthians 13:8-9), the inescapable *partiality* of human knowledge (57).

After the *Socratic Memorabilia* in 1759 Hamann revisits many of these themes in his works of the early 1760s. Following the 1759 Berlin Academy prize contest (which I discuss in chapter five), language becomes a major focus for Hamann's writings during this period. In a similar vein to his re-reading of Socrates as a sculptor, in *Cloverleaf of*

Hellenistic Letters (1762) Hamann portrays Aristotle and Plato as a draftsman and colourist respectively, and foregrounds their role as conduits for ancient sources of wisdom, against dominant readings focusing on their logical and rational discursive methods rather than on the content of their insights (Hamann, 2007: 45). In his 1762 *Aesthetica in Nuce*, he is at his most condemnatory towards the philosophical zeal for abstraction, writing:

> Oh for a muse like a refiner's fire, and like a fuller's soap! – – She will dare to purify the natural use of the senses from the unnatural use of abstractions, by which our concepts of things are as maimed as the name of the Creator is suppressed and blasphemed. (79)

Throughout the piece Hamann alludes to Francis Bacon's critique of abstract rationality in favour of an experimental empiricism. Though Hamann's views on experience differ significantly from Bacon and other empiricists (as we shall see further in chapter five), he nevertheless leverages their work against what he sees as the dangerously narrow and misleading rationalism of his philosophical contemporaries, appealing to something much like what Bacon calls the *lumine naturae et experientiae* or "light of nature and experience" (Bacon, 1863: 85). However, Hamann does not share the empiricists' narrow experimental conception of experience as a kind of epistemological input or evidence (as per the natural sciences). Instead he proposes an aesthetic and spiritual conception of experience, which is given form in language. Hamann challenges lovers of abstraction to read the *Iliad* without the vowels alpha or omega (80). Ultimately he concludes that, regardless of whether they notice or not, even the most rationalistic of philosophers cannot help but depend on the imperfections of human language and linguistically mediated experience in order to advance their views and to make sense of the world around them.

Hamann met Herder in Königsberg around 1763 (Clark, 1955: 46). Hamann taught Herder English, and together they undertook readings of Shakespeare, John Milton, Edward Young, Laurence Sterne and David Hume (46). Although some scholars have suggested that Hamann's influence on Herder's mature philosophical views has been somewhat exaggerated (see, for example, Clark, 1955; Forster, 2010, 2011a), it is clear that Hamann made a profound impression on the younger man. Herder also attended Immanuel Kant's classes in Königsberg between 1762 and 1764, more than a decade and a half before the latter's *Critique of Pure Reason* of 1781.

In his 1765 "How Philosophy Can Become More Universal and Useful for the Benefit of the People", Herder dialectically argues against abstract philosophy for philosophy's sake, and advances a kind of philosophy which is closer to the concerns of ordinary people. The main question which the essay seeks to address is: "how can philosophy be reconciled with humanity and politics so that it also really serves the latter?". In responding to this question he alternates between a deep cynicism about the utility of philosophy and a measured optimism, if some fundamental adjustments are made in its scope, aims and methods. In his cynical mode, he paints a picture of rationalist philosophers as "a troglodyte-people living in caves with Minerva's night-owls" (Herder, 2002: 7), peddling the "machine-like" teaching of "school Logic" (9), which is "full of holes" (12) and "eternal errors" (16).

While philosophers are often convinced that their discourses and discoveries will somehow lead to improving the world, rationalistic philosophy is a kind of "siren song" (17) luring us to "a labyrinth full of distinctions" (24) and "endless doubts and errors" (15), leading us to "get lost in the thorns" (24). The mathematical apriorism of

philosophy is ultimately "useless for human beings" (18), "useless for the state" (7), "harmful for society" (18) and "plunges [us] into ruin" (17). He writes:

> Our philosophical reason only, like Daedalus, creates for itself labyrinths, in order to make itself a guiding thread; it ties knots in order to be able to untie them; it throws itself into battles where swords and arrows wound in order to play the part of a holy art. O doctor, aid yourself. Lucky is the people that does not need your aid. (Herder, 2002: 11)

Like Hamann, Herder argues that philosophers of pure reason are blind to the evolving world of life, nature, history and human sociality, and attempt to subordinate their experience of it to abstract categories and inflexible formal systems and methods. In doing so, they perpetuate harmful fictions. Following Hamann's account in *Aesthetic in Nuce*, Herder comments on the destructive potential of the overzealous purification of reason:

> O you who wish to tear away with a bold hand the veil that nature wove before things, may your hand tremble back. You schoolteacher, who force your pupils to abstract philosophy, you work contrary to nature – feverishly and yet uselessly, indeed as a destroyer of nature. (Herder, 2002: 17)

Herder says that in order to redeem itself, philosophy must stop "clinging to creations of our own reason", and stop renouncing the "habit of lively regard for the creations of nature and society" (11). "Philosophy must descend from the stars to human beings" (19), he writes, and develop a "healthy understanding" (11) which speaks of and speaks to the world:

> If philosophy [Philosophie] is to become useful for human beings, then let it make the human
>
> being its center. Philosophy, which has weakened itself by far too huge overextensions, will
>
> become strong when it restricts itself to its center. (Herder, 2002: 21)

If it is to become useful for humanity, philosophy must become leave its caves and darkness and become literate with the world. He presents us with a vision of people reclaiming the resources of philosophy, and putting them to work in the service of humanity:

> So push forth, O people, into the holy places of philosophy. Tear down all the idols, and construct
>
> there state buildings, assemblies where instead of philosophical nonsense the healthy
>
> understanding counsels the state, humanity. Tear from the philosophers their Diogenes-capes and
>
> teach them pillars of the state. (Herder, 2002: 18)

Would there be anything recognisably philosophical about a philosophy which is literate with the world as Herder describes it? Would such a philosophy not simply dissolve into other disciplines? While he closes the essay with provocative thought that "philosophy becomes anthropology", in his more optimistic moments he argues that "only philosophy can be an antidote for all the evil into which philosophical curiosity has plunged us" (18), and that "all the shortcomings of the healthy understanding must be capable of being removed by itself" (11), a thought which anticipates Kant's critical project of the following decades.

As we shall examine further in chapter five, in his 1767-1768 *Fragments on Recent German Literature* Herder argues that philosophers' relentless quest for abstraction leave them impoverished. He opens the essay with the thought that "the exactitude of a

language diminishes its richness" (Herder, 2002: 33), echoing Hamann's claim that "the purity of a language dispossesses it of its wealth" (Hamann, 2007: 31). Under the influence of philosophers like Christian Wolff, who wish to "determine [words] precisely", philosophical language has been "greatly reduced in synonyms" and thereby in its expressive repertoire. Happily, Herder says, philosophers' pushes for purification don't have much effect on discourse outside the academy. In the *Fragments* Herder also reiterates Hamann's claim that "poetry is the mother-tongue of the human race" (Hamann, 2007: 63). Thus Herder writes:

> You cannot determine them all, philological philosopher! You will presumably want to throw those ones away? But does everyday language also throw them away? No! Your jurisdiction does not yet extend that far, and still less into the land of the poets. The poet will inevitably become furious if you rob him of synonyms; he lives from superfluity. And if you determine them? But aside from the fact that you cannot, then beautiful prose and beautiful poetry disappears completely, everything becomes a rosary of counted-out terms of art. It is ever a stroke of luck for the poet and a stroke of bad luck for the philosopher that the first inventors of language were not philosophers and its first developers were mostly poets. (Herder, 2002: 36)

In a series of essays in the 1770s, Herder argues that while reason *is* language. However, many philosophers view reason as a "compartmentalized, separately effective force" (85) above and beyond language and experience. Herder laments philosophers' "single cold gift of abstraction" (138) and their love of "cold, slowly reasoned, carefully abstracting experiments" to extract nature's secrets (135). Contrary to this philosophical vision of abstraction, in his view reason is social and historical, imitating "resounding, acting, stirring nature" (Herder, 2002: 103).

In 1772, Hamann wrote several essays that responded to Herder's views on reason and language in *Treatise on the Origin of Language*, including *The Last Will and Testament of the Knight of the Rose-Cross* and *Philological Ideas and Doubts*. While he disagrees with many aspects of Herder's account (and doubts that it hangs together as a coherent argument), Hamann agrees that our reason is derived from language, and that language is very often the origin of philosophical confusions and misunderstandings. He argues that reason "has its source in the twofold instruction of sensible revelations and human testimonies" and that, through their conceptual analyses, philosophers "[put] asunder what nature has joined together".

Herder's views about reason in the *Treatise* are developed throughout his works in the 1770s. In his 1778 *On the Cognition and Sensation of the Human Soul*, he argues that philosophical reason is derived from and dependent upon language and experience. While philosophers might attack natural language for its imperfections, they nevertheless have no alternative through which to formulate and articulate their ideas and systems:

> The philosophers who declaim against figurative language and themselves serve nothing but old, often uncomprehended, figurative idols are at least in great contradiction with themselves. They do not want new gold to be minted, while on the other hand they do nothing but ever and ever spin the same threads out of precisely such, often much worse, gold. (Herder, 2002: 188)

Herder argues that philosophers' passion for the purification and mechanisation of reason means that they risk becoming absorbed by what are effectively irrelevant games:

Now it is in the face of this sort of deep abyss of obscure sensations, forces, and irritations that our bright and clear philosophy is horrified most of all; it crosses itself before it as before the hell of the soul's *basest* forces and prefers to play on the Leibnizian chess-board with a few empty words and classifications about *obscure* and *clear*, *distinct* and *confused* ideas, about *cognition in* and *outside oneself*, *with oneself* and *without oneself*, and so forth. This method is so lovely and easy that it has already been chosen as a basic principle to introduce into philosophy nothing but *empty* words, with which, it is held, one is as little required to think as the calculator with his numbers: this, it is held, will enable philosophy to attain the perfection of mathematics, that one can keep on inferring without thinking – a philosophy from which may all the Muses save us! (196)

Whereas the pure reason of philosophers "unwinds everything from out of itself" (208), Herder argues that philosophers should rather look at how reason is constituted by language as a set of evolving social institutions. Like Hamann, he alludes to empiricist critiques of philosophical rationalism – albeit with a very different conception of experience. Hamann and Herder argue that experience is given form by language and a broader range of meaningful media. Instead of taking the methods of the natural sciences as models for understanding experience, Hamann and Herder propose that philosophers should look beyond the purification of rationality and the abstract relations between ideas (like pure mathematicians dealing with formulae) – and towards the numerous contexts, social interactions and cultural forms which give shape to our language, understanding and experience.

Kant's Critique of Pure Reason

While Hamann and Herder published their missives on reason and language in the 1770s, Immanuel Kant was busy working on a project which would come to redefine the terrain of modern European philosophy in the following centuries. These were his so-called "silent years", from the 1770s until the publication of the *Critique of Pure Reason* in 1781. Quite a few of the key elements of this work date back to his inaugural dissertation "On the Form and Principles of the Sensible and Intelligible World" of 1770, given on the occasion of being made Professor of Logic and Metaphysics at the University of Königsberg. Kant considered this the first work of his critical period, proposing that a compilation of his writings began with this piece (Kuehn, 2001: 190). In this piece he maintains a distinction between "sensibility", "in virtue of which it is possible for the subject's own representative state to be affected in a definite way by the presence of some object"; and "intelligence (rationality)", "the faculty of a subject in virtue of which it has the power to represent things which cannot by their own quality come before the senses of that subject" (Kant, 1992: 384). According to Kant these two sources of our knowledge of the world – the world of the senses and the world of the intellect – are separate and neither one can be understood purely in terms of the other (Kuhn, 2001: 190). Experience can be considered in terms of a combination of the two, and comes about when sensory appearances are related to each other through the intellect (Kant, 1992: 386).

In this dissertation, Kant accuses Wolff of turning philosophers away from the "noblest of the enterprises of antiquity" of investigating the nature of phenomena and noumena, towards the discussion of comparatively inconsequential details in logic

(387). Instead Kant proposes to examine the interaction between sense and intellect, what we can know of them and how we can know through them, and how they co-operate to produce the "phenomenal universe" of our experience (391). This move – to effect a shift in philosophical discussions of reason from a narrower focus on formal logical rules to a broader exploration of the conditions of possibility of experience – will be immensely important for German philosophy for the following two centuries, as well as playing a defining role in Hamann and Herder's respective metacritiques. While he suggests that philosophers of pure reason aspired to "a genuine metaphysics without any admixture of the senses" (Kuehn, 2001: 190) – Kant proposes a complementary "propaedeutical" science which could aid metaphysical speculation by identifying, analysing and conceptually clarifying the ideas which structure our experience:

> Since, then, empirical principles are not found in metaphysics, the concepts met in metaphysics are not to be sought in the senses but in the very nature of the pure understanding, and that not as *innate* concepts but as concepts abstracted from the laws inherent in the mind (by attending to its actions on the occasion of an experience), and therefore as *acquired* concepts. To this genus belongs possibility, existence, necessity, substance, cause, *etc.*, together with their opposites or correlates. Such concepts never enter into any sensory representations as parts, and thus they could not be abstracted from such representation in any way at all. (Kant, 1992: 387-388)

He proceeds to give an analysis of the concepts of space and time, as "formal principles of the phenomenal universe", "schemata and conditions of everything sensitive in human cognition" which are "absolutely primary and fundamental" (391). Time and space, says Kant, are "pure intuitions", "presupposed by the senses" which structure and enable experience. They are fundamental conditions of "all possible objects of the senses", "subjective and ideal" and "issuing from the nature of the mind" rather than

"objective and real" as substances, accidents or relations (397). As they are pure intuitions rather than general concepts, "all the fundamental properties of these concepts lie beyond the limits of reason, and, thus, they cannot in any way be explained by the understanding" (399).

Through this propaedeutic project, Kant wishes to disentangle our sensibility from our intellect, in order to obtain a clearer distinction between the two domains: each with its own principles and methods. Many forms of philosophical misunderstanding arise from mixing the two domains. In particular, he is motivated to insulate the operations of pure reason from "principles of sensibility" which have "disastrously permeated the whole of metaphysics" (407). He does this through the examination of "fallacies of subreption" or "subreptic axioms" which lead philosophers to treat matters of pure reason in the same way that we think about matters of sensibility (408-409). For example, we are led by the forms of sensibility of space and time to think that "whatever is, is somewhere and somewhen", but this notion will lead us to absurd conclusions if we try to apply it to immaterial entities such as the soul (409-410). Kant presents this work as a contribution to the broader endeavour to purify reason such that it may be more effectively utilised by "all who intend to penetrate the very recesses of metaphysics" (415). Moreover, he contends that such a project of the purification is necessary if we are to avoid being misled by reason and in order to realise its full potential:

> Here, in pure philosophy, *method precedes all science*. And everything which is attempted before rules of this method have been properly hammered out and firmly established will appear to have been rashly conceived and deserve to be relegated to the vain playthings of the mind. For, since it is the right use of reason which here sets up the very principles themselves, and since it is in virtue

of the natural character of reason alone that objects and also the axioms, which are to be thought

with respect to objects, first become known, the exposition of the laws of pure reason is the very

genesis of science; and the distinguishing of these laws from suppositious laws is the criterion of

truth. (406-407)

Many of these themes in his inaugural dissertation preoccupied Kant for the

following decade, and prepared the way for work on his *Critique of Pure Reason* (which

in 1771 had the working title of "The Limits of Sensibility and Reason"). As mentioned

above, his *Critique* serves to demonstrate both the limits of pure reason, by highlighting

the contradictions that arise from its more extravagant claims, as well as giving a more

realistic account of its constitution and potential utility. This dual function of the

Critique mean that various aspects of Kant's thought served as an inspiration for both

critics as well as advocates of rationalistic philosophy.

Against "dogmatic" rationalist metaphysicians who say that we can derive

substantive truths about the world on the basis of reason alone, he argued that there is

little we can surmise about the world without drawing on experience. Correctly

understood, pure reason is a limited instrument that enables us to formally analyse

certain aspects of our understanding. Kant contends that many philosophers in the past

have been over-optimistic about reason's potential to uncover substantive truths about

the world through its own resources. In his "antinomies of pure reason" Kant constructs

rational arguments for metaphysical theses, immediately followed by counter-arguments

for their antitheses: effectively a *reductio ad absurdum* argument for the impotence of

reason without experience. As opposed to the powerful panacea of rationalist

metaphysicians, Kant ends up defending a much more modest conception of reason as

an instrument for keeping our understanding in check:

> The greatest and perhaps only utility of all philosophy of pure reason is thus only negative, namely that it does not serve for expansion, as an organon, but rather, as a discipline, serves for the determination of boundaries, and instead of discovering truth it has only the silent merit of guarding against errors. (Kant, 1998: 672)

In 1771, in response to Kant's inaugural dissertation "On the Form and Principles of the Sensible and Intelligible World", Hamann translates the conclusion of Book I of David Hume's 1738 *Treatise of Human Nature*. Hamann titles the translation "Night Thoughts of a Skeptic", alluding to Edward Young's 1742 *Night Thoughts*, one of the most popular English language poems of the 18th century, which follows the protagonist's nocturnal ruminations as they come to terms with their own mortality. As Manfred Kuehn comments, Hamann's translation was intended to highlight the "existential despair" at the end of the first book of Hume's treatise – drawing implications from the text other than those that Hume would have likely intended (Kuehn, 2001: 199). Hume writes of having "narrowly escap'd ship-wreck" in a "leaky weather-beaten vessel" perilously casting out into the "immense depths of philosophy", and the "wretched condition, weakness, and disorder of [his] faculties" (Hume, 1896: 263-264). Hamann connects the dark honesty and confessional tone of Hume's thoughts about the "manifold contradictions and imperfections in human reason" (268) and the "chimerical systems" of metaphysics (273) to Young's nocturnal ruminations on the frailty of humankind and the human intellect. The opening lines of his *Night Thoughts* tell us of his "wreck'd desponding thought", "emerging from a sea of dreams / Tumultuous", "her helm of reason lost", and of the restorative power of "silence and darkness", the contemplation of "fathomless Abyss" and "dread Eternity" (Young, 1989: 37). "Reason is incapable of dispelling these clouds", writes Hume (Hume, 1896: 269). Instead of trusting in a narrow conception of formalised rationality, we must look to our

linguistically mediated traditions, experience, habit and the imagination in order to account for human understanding, and the scope and limits of our knowledge.

Hume was written about in Germany from around the early 1740s, and his reputation was well established in philosophical circles prior to the translation of his *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* in 1755 (Kuehn, 1987: 49). Kant lectured about Hume in Königsberg in the 1750s, and as well as hearing about him from Hamann (who alluded to him in his *Socratic Memorabilia*), he discussed Hume extensively with his close friend, the British merchant Joseph Green, from the mid 1760s (Kuehn, 2001: 154). In his *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* of 1783, Kant famously wrote that Hume interrupted his "dogmatic slumber", specifically regarding Hume's challenge to the idea that reason alone, independently of experience, can give us knowledge of cause and effect (Kant, 1997: 10). Such was Hume's influence on Kant that his *Critique* and the *Prolegomena* were initially seen as continuations of Hume's project. Indeed, Kant himself said that he thought of the *Critique* as "the execution of Hume's problem in its widest extent" (Kuehn, 2001: 231). However, even if Hume's analysis of causation spurred Kant into "a completely different direction" (as he wrote in the *Prolegomena*), Kant nevertheless maintained that there were very crucial gaps in Hume's empiricist philosophy. While Kant agreed with Hume that the rationalist cannot account for our understanding of causation on the basis of pure reason alone, he contends that neither can the empiricist account for it on the basis of the senses alone:

> So I tried first whether Hume's objection might not be presented in a general manner, and I soon found that the concept of the connection of cause and effect is far from being the only concept through which the understanding thinks connections of things a priori; rather, metaphysics consists wholly of such concepts. I sought to ascertain their number, and as I had successfully attained this

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in the way I wished, namely from a single principle, I proceeded to the deduction of these

concepts, from which I henceforth became assured that they were not, as Hume had feared,

derived from experience, but had arisen from the pure understanding. (Kant, 1997: 10)

Throughout his works in the 1780s, Kant argues that we cannot explain how the world

appears to us, for our phenomenological experience of the world, with reference to

either reason or the senses in isolation. The world comes to us packaged up and

structured through "intuitions" of space and time, and the twelve "categories" of unity,

plurality, totality, subsistence, causality, community, possibility, existence, necessity,

reality, negation and limitation. These basic intuitions and categories that structure our

experience of the world cannot be purely derived from or assumed to correspond with

the world "out there", in itself, apart from our experience of it. Hence, Kant contends,

our experience of the world must be mediated through our own conceptual resources

which are in place prior to our experience, but which cannot be reduced to or derived

from our pure reason. This he calls the "pure understanding": the fundamental

conditions of possibility for experience. Like the elements of pure reason, concepts of

the pure understanding are *a priori*, and stand in need of clarification and separation

from the senses. Thus while pure reason is the "faculty that provides the principles of

cognition *a priori*", Kant suggests that the understanding is a "faculty for judging" with

concepts (Kant, 1998: 149, 205).

As in his inaugural dissertation, "On the Form and Principles of the Sensible and

Intelligible World", in the *Critique* Kant maintains that we need to carefully analyse the

distinction between reason and the senses, and this analysis is essential preparation for

any future philosophical speculation. However, while philosophical analysis aims to

separate out these different capacities, it is only through their interaction that we are able to know:

> Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind. It is thus just as necessary to make the mind's concepts sensible (i.e., to add an object to them in intuition) as it is to make its intuitions understandable (i.e., to bring them under concepts). Further, these two faculties or capacities cannot exchange their functions. The understanding is not capable of intuiting anything, and the senses are not capable of thinking anything. Only from their unification can cognition arise. But on this account one must not mix up their roles, rather one has great cause to separate them carefully from each other and distinguish them. Hence we distinguish the science of the rules of sensibility in general, i.e., aesthetic, from the science of the rules of understanding in general, i.e., logic. (Kant, 1998: 193-194)

Kant's work in the 1770s and 1780s came to transform the philosophical landscape in Europe over the coming centuries. His *Critique of Pure Reason* posed significant challenges to rationalists and empiricists of all stripes and demanded a response from those who would wish to argue in a binary fashion for either reason or experience as the primary source of evidence or justification for our knowledge. His "transcendental" analysis led subsequent generations of philosophers to focus on how the world as it appears to us is structured and mediated.

Kant's work from this period contributed to a picture of reason as obtaining its power and universality by virtue of its limited ambitions and scope. According to Kant, mathematics provides "the most resplendent example of pure reason" and philosophy has "every cause to hope for a sisterly union with [mathematics]" (Kant, 1998: 630, 641). While he shares the admiration for mathematics as other philosophers examined in the previous chapter, Kant ultimately denies that mathematics can serve as an adequate

model for philosophy. The task of philosophers is rather to guard against the errors of reason to which they are so predisposed:

> Reason falls into this perplexity through no fault of its own. It begins from principles whose use is unavoidable in the course of experience and at the same time sufficiently warranted by it. With these principles it rises (as its nature also requires) ever higher, to more remote conditions. But since it becomes aware in this way that its business must always remain incomplete because the questions never cease, reason sees itself necessitated to take refuge in principles that overstep all possible use in experience, and yet seem so unsuspicious that even ordinary common sense agrees with them. But it thereby falls into obscurity and contradictions, from which it can indeed surmise that it must somewhere be proceeding on the ground of hidden errors; but it cannot discover them, for the principles on which it is proceeding, since they surpass the bounds of all experience, no longer recognize any touchstone of experience. The battlefield of these endless controversies is called metaphysics. (Kant, 1998: 99)

"One can regard the critique of pure reason", Kant wrote, "as the true court of justice for all controversies of pure reason" (649). Kant thought that the minimalism of reason was a natural corollary of its universality. The fact that reason was stripped and separated from experience, language, tradition, culture, history and society was also what meant that it was *generally* rather than only *locally* applicable. Like the smelting of precious metals from unrefined ore, Kant hopes his "court of justice" will help to sufficiently raise the temperature in the furnace of his enquiry, so as to melt, burn and boil away all that is inessential, extraneous and contingent – leaving a thin but powerful substrate of conceptual material which, if properly deployed, will assist us in unlocking the secrets of both "the starry heavens above" and "the moral law within" (Kuehn, 2001: 313).

Kant's work after his *Critique* represents a crucial turning point in discussions about reason, language and experience in German philosophy. On the one hand, Kant draws on the legacy and ideals of the philosophers of pure reason discussed in the previous chapter, in order to offer a global and abiding analytical vocabulary through which to obtain an unprecedented degree of clarity, certainty and precision in philosophical deliberation in all contexts and settings. On the other hand, Kant offers a penetrating critique which highlights the limits of rationalist metaphysics which predominantly focuses on the logical form of the syllogism (including through his Antinomies and Paralogisms of Pure Reason) – suggesting instead that philosophical discussions of reason must provide an account of what it is for human beings to possess a world. His transcendental analysis of the conditions of possibility of experience will become a vital reference point for later philosophers who draw on the legacy of the linguistic turn in German philosophy. As we shall see below, Hamann and Herder question whether such an analysis can succeed on its own terms in order to provide a universally applicable set of categories and conditions which structure experience regardless of time or setting. Instead they both argue that Kant overlooks the way in which the structure of reason and experience depend upon and vary in accordance with language.

Hamann and Herder's Metacritiques of Kant

As will be examined at greater length in chapter five, both Hamann and Herder took issue with Kant's zeal for the purification of reason and for separating it from language, culture, experience and history in their responses to his *Critique of Pure Reason*. Hamann was well acquainted with Kant's publisher, Johann Friedrich Hartknoch, who secretly gave him proof sheets of Kant's *Critique* as they became available, at Hamann's request (Surber, 2001: 51). Hamann wrote a review of the new book that he

didn't end up publishing. His *Metacritique on the Purism of Reason* was written in 1784 based on notes from the previous few years, but, again, this did not see the light of day during his lifetime, apparently so as not to offend Kant (Kuehn, 2001: 301). Hamann's *Metacritique* opens with a quote from Virgil lamenting the "emptiness of things" and goes on to allude to Berkeley and Hume's views on the derivation of abstract general terms from concrete particular ones, and on how the former are parasitic on the latter (Hamann, 2007: 205). This sets the scene for Hamann's broader argument, which essentially challenges philosophers' prejudice for abstraction – and specifically Kant's attempts to purify reason from tradition, experience and language. He argues that surely Kant cannot have seriously dwelt upon the mysterious and problematic "double impossibility" of "the human knowledge of objects of experience without and before any experience" and "the possibility of a sensible intuition before any sensation of an object" (206). For "how is the faculty of thought possible?", Hamann asks, "the faculty to think right and left, before and without, with and beyond experience?" (211). He contends that Kant's prejudice for the *a priori* betrays "an old, cold prejudice for mathematics" (210) and "a gnostic hatred of matter or else a mystic love of form" (209). While various branches of mathematics are able to fix and focus their enquiry with reference to "empirical signs and figures" metaphysical abstractions are at risk of unhinging themselves from the concrete, socially and historically situated institutions of meaning:

> metaphysics abuses the word-signs and figures of speech of our empirical knowledge by treating
> them as nothing but hieroglyphs and types of ideal relations. Through this learned troublemaking it
> works the honest decency of language into such a meaningless, rutting, unstable, indefinite
> something = x that nothing is left but a windy sough, a magic shadow play, at most, as the wise

> Helvétius says, the talisman and rosary of a transcendental superstitious belief in *entia rationis*,
>
> their empty sacks and slogans (210)

Hamann's rejoinder to the Kant's vacuous "doctrinairism, doubt, and connoisseurship" of pure reason is language and experience. Though he doesn't recognise it, Hamann contends that language underpins Kant's whole enterprise – from his identification of fundamental categories and concepts which structure our experience, to his methodology and mode of reasoning, which all fundamentally takes place in language, albeit of a highly rarefied and unusual variety. Hamann's critique of Kant's critique is a *metacritique* in the sense that he turns to the conditions of possibility of the latter's philosophy: the linguistic practices and institutions upon which Kant's critical project depends. Thus Hamann writes:

> no deduction is needed to demonstrate the genealogical priority of language, and its heraldry, over
>
> the seven holy functions of logical propositions and inferences. Not only is the entire faculty of
>
> thought founded on language […] but language is also the centerpoint of reason's
>
> misunderstanding with itself (211)

While Kant seeks to conceptually distinguish the senses and the understanding (which Hamann describes as "a violent, unjustified, willful divorce"), Hamann contends that there is a fundamental unity between them. Alluding to a passage from Cicero, Hamann says he wishes to turn Kant and others from the "clenched fist" of narrow and fruitless logical manipulations, to the "open palm" of eloquence, developed through free, creative and sociable engagement with language, letters and experience. Hamann would have been intimately familiar with this distinction between logic (as exemplified by mathematical proof and extolled in medieval scholasticism) and rhetoric (as later

propounded by Renaissance humanists in the fourteenth and fifteenth century), from his immersion in classical literature and its reception in the world of letters.

Hamann is said to have corresponded extensively with Herder about Kant's *Critique* in the early 1780s. While unfortunately very few of Herder's letters to Hamann from this period have survived, Hamann acknowledges his debt to Herder for ideas in his *Metacritique* in several later letters (Clark, 1955: 397). After Hamann's death in 1788, and riled by a disagreement with several Fichteans in Jena in the late 1790s, Herder used Hamann's unpublished manuscript as the basis for his own response to Kant: *A Metacritique on the Critique of Pure Reason* (Herder, 1799). Herder's arguments in the *Metacritique* broadly overlap with those of Hamann – to the extent that he was accused of plagiarism by a Kantian philosopher who had obtained a copy of Hamann's earlier piece (Clark, 1955: 397). Herder says that Kant entirely neglects to see the extent to which his philosophy is dependent on language. All forms of abstraction, reasoning and philosophising fundamentally depend on language. Philosophers neglect this at their peril, and if they do they risk – like Kant – succumbing to all kinds of monstrous misunderstandings, "illusions", and "spells", getting lost in elaborate "word games" (*Wortspielerei*), and unwittingly creating "metaphysical delusion images" (406), "empty word bags" and "transcendental steam" (Cloeren, 1988: 51). Like Hamann, Herder thinks that language is the source of "reason's misunderstanding with itself":

> many of the misunderstandings, contradictions and absurdities attributed to reason are probably
> not due to it, but to language, as its insufficient or ill-used tool (Cloeren, 1988: 47)

Herder approvingly alludes to the British empiricist John Locke's discussion of language in the third book of his *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, and quotes a passage from Locke on the inseparability of language and knowledge:

> I must confess, then, that, when I first began this Discourse of the Understanding, and a good while after, I had not the least thought that any consideration of words was at all necessary to it. But when, having passed over the original and composition of our ideas, I began to examine the extent and certainty of our knowledge, I found it had so near a connexion with words, that, unless their force and manner of signification were first well observed, there could be very little said clearly and pertinently concerning knowledge: which being conversant about truth, had constantly to do with propositions. And though it terminated in things, yet it was for the most part so much by the intervention of words, that they seemed scarce separable from our general knowledge. (Locke, 1894: 118-119)

While the reception of Locke's account of language will receive further treatment in the next chapter, for our present purposes it is crucial to note that in his *Metacritique*, Herder agrees with Locke on two essential points. Firstly, that language plays an essential role in our understanding of the world. As Herder puts it, Locke was "not indifferent" to language as "the organon of our reason" (Surber, 2001: 90). Secondly that language is a significant source of misunderstanding and misconception – particularly in rationalistic philosophy. In a chapter of his *Essay* titled "Of the Abuses of Words", Locke details a wide variety of ways through which language can lead us astray – from confusions about things which do not exist, to using language in unusual and fantastical ways. Along these lines, Herder accuses Kant of conjuring vacuous phantasms through the idiosyncratic misuse of ordinary words. Though he doesn't realise it, this purified reason of Kant's is parasitic upon language, causing the "healthy

language of our understanding" to "become a body full of transcendental tapeworms, full of verbal schemata slithering all around" (Surber, 2001: 114).

Furthermore, Herder is suspicious of Kant's preoccupation with purifying the *a priori*, reiterating Hamann's complaint of the impossibility of access to anything before or outside of experience. Herder also shares Hamann's distrust of philosophers' overzealous pursuit of abstractions. "The more abstract a concept is", he writes, "the more the pictorial content of its expression is reduced, until finally it seems entirely to disappear" (Sikka, 2007: 39). While he recognises that abstraction is an essential operation of language, in the hands of philosophers this is transformed into a pathological obsession. Thus he contrasts Kant's "old hollow wreath of winter straw called transcendentalism" with the "young spring" of our actual linguistic practices upon which our lived experience depends. Echoing Hamann, Herder writes of Kant's transcendental philosophy:

> With ghostly words it constitutes a "super-reason" [*Übervernunft*] which terminates all philosophy and makes possible only figments, figments *ex nullis ad nulla*, an *a priori* which creates itself before it exists, separated from itself and without any experience. (91)

Some commentators have argued that Herder's review fundamentally misunderstood Kant's project and represents a reversion to form of naïve, pre-critical empiricism, whereby we should turn to the senses for insight into the nature and functioning of our understanding (Sikka, 2007: 31; Haym, 1954). However, it is clear that Herder is not advocating a position akin to that of his British predecessors, and he acknowledges that the senses alone are not sufficient to account for how we experience the world. In this

sense, Herder draws on Kant's transcendental analytic, but argues that it is language which gives structure to experience:

> To the old saying, "Nothing is in the understanding that was not in the senses," one can and must add the counterclaim. In human beings, there is no sensible concept in which the understanding had no part and which it did not form […] That organon of all concepts of the understanding, imagination, and the senses, *language*, provides a secure guarantee of this. (Surber, 2001: 121)

Like Hamann, Herder argues that "[reason] itself is and is called language", that "language is the criterion of reason" (128). To understand our reason and how it functions, we should not, following Kant, look to undertake a systematic project of purification and formalisation of reason in the abstract, but instead look at how languages shape our understanding – including at their textures, structures, relation to canonical texts and our experience, and their aesthetic and affective as well as conceptual dimensions. Rather than a "Critique of Pure Reason" we should undertake a "Physiology of the Human Powers of Knowledge" (92), through the study of our language and experience. Thus, Herder suggests that philosophers should cultivate a more holistic conception of the genesis and constitution of linguistically mediated reason:

> [...] instead of *transcending*, reason must turn to the origin of its endowment, i.e., back to itself and ask the question, "How did you come to yourself and to your concepts; how have you expressed these and employed, linked and unified these; how is it that you attribute to them universal, necessary certainty?" When reason neglects this question and isolates itself from *all* experience, it would also do well to isolate itself from language, since it certainly has language only through experience. (91)

The fetishisation of the mathematical method manifested in the works of rationalistic philosophers such as Descartes and Leibniz – the desire to turn philosophy into a form of calculus such that the "external form" given to concepts is determinative of philosophical theses – is to put the cart before the horse, according to Herder. While philosophers are misled into thinking that the purification, abstraction and formalisation of reason might lead them to more certain conclusions, to new and unexpected insights (like Newton's discoveries in the physical sciences), in fact, Herder says, "method means manner of presentation [*Lehrart*]" (126), and "method … is not everything" (127). If we model philosophical enquiry on formal mathematical or scientific method, we arbitrarily restrict ourselves to a very narrow section of our reason and understanding. By doing so, not only do we risk being met with "shame, boredom and derision", but we exclude many other dimensions of expression and exploration in "the cultivation of reason": lucidity, fluency, translation, craft, tone, metaphor, imagination and many other things (127). He contends that the conception of reason that Kant inherits and develops is one which is comparatively impoverished.

This disagreement about the character of the human understanding between Kant and his former pupil Herder went back at least until the mid 1770s. According to Theodor Gottlieb Hippel, a mutual friend of Kant and Hamann, Kant did not like, nor fully understand Herder's *On the Oldest Document of the Human Race* (Kuehn, 2001: 224). In this piece Herder argues that the biblical book of Genesis is the earliest written record we have of a much older oral tradition, and that through the study of this and other theological texts, we may shed light on the relationship between humanity and the divine. In particular, Herder urges us to turn from the dry and unelucidating abstractions of philosophy to the study of (the development of) human language in all of its richness

– including its poetic and affective dimensions, rather than just its conceptual function. Kant wrote to Hamann about what Herder meant by the piece, and never wrote back to Hamann's reply. In 1785 Kant published a very critical anonymous review of Herder's 1784 *Ideas on a Philosophy of the History of Mankind*, in which the latter argues that "there is no such thing as an isolated faculty of reason" and that philosophers should "[return] from the world of fantasy to the world of empirical reality" and "recognize that the whole chain of human development is characterized by man's dependence on his fellows" (Herder, 1969: 311). In his review Kant said he hoped that philosophy would help Herder in "pruning … superfluous growth" (Kuehn, 2001: 293). The review profoundly upset Herder, who wrote to Hamann that he thought it was "malicious" and "mean-spirited", that its criticisms were "infantile" and patronising, and concluded to break off contact with Kant, saying he could keep his "metaphysical-critical throne", "conceptual fancies", "[metaphysician's] pride and … unbearable self-importance" (295-296).

These two contrasting analyses of reason – exemplified by Kant on the one hand, and Hamann and Herder on the other hand – were to prove highly influential in the following century. Kant's project sought to provide an analysis of reason in response to the excesses of dogmatic metaphysical rationalism. It demanded the analysis, clarification and determination of concepts, as well as the scrutiny, elaboration and documentation of the mechanics of argumentation. Crucially Kant departed from the thinkers examined in the previous chapter in that he argued that an analysis of reason required that we account for the constitution of worlds of experience, as well as the mechanics of logical argumentation. Hamann and Herder's analyses drew on Kant's transcendental shift to look at how reason depends on language as a living, evolving

medium. *Contra* philosophers who want to better understand reason through purification, Hamann and Herder propose a turn to the plethora of contexts which shape how we apprehend and interact with the world, to gain a richer conception of human. Surber (2001: 12-13) contrasts the "conceptual" or "categorical *a priori*" of Kant's *Critique* to the "linguistic *a priori*" of Hamann and Herder's *Metacritique* – a term which Karl-Otto Apel also uses with reference to Heidegger's work (Apel, 1973: 39). Rather than attempting to distil our understanding down to its essential, necessary and universal components, Hamann and Herder highlight how the apparatus of our understanding evolves over time and the manifold contingencies implicated in shaping our apprehension of the world around us.

Are the metacritiques of Kant's critique of pure reason proffered by Hamann and Herder ultimately compelling? While Kant does acknowledge the role of natural language in philosophy in several places throughout his works (see, e.g. Forster, 2012), he nevertheless underestimates how our structures of understanding evolve and are situated in various historical, social and cultural contexts, treating his analysis of the categories and concepts which give structure to human worlds as universal rather than culturally and historically particular. As Hamann and Herder suggest, Kant does indeed focus his attention on abstract and ahistorical philosophical speculation, rather than incorporating reflection on where these ideas come from, how they evolve, and how they are used in different settings.

However, might not we object that Hamann, Herder and Kant are talking at cross purposes, and the former two miss the point of Kant's project? Certainly neither Hamann nor Herder explicitly acknowledges the crucial differences between Kant's

earlier work before the 1770s (where his ideas are arguably closer to Leibniz and Wolff in some regards) and his later critical, transcendental philosophy after the 1770s, which is an important source of insight for their respective metacritiques. While their metacritiques focus on the extent to which Kant's account fails to see how our understanding and apprehension of the world is underpinned by language, perhaps they underestimate his aspiration to *create* something more universal. Just like the general applicability of Newton's laws, or the global aspirations of Christian spirituality, Kant is fundamentally motivated by the prospect of a distilling a purified philosophical reason that can be applied across different settings. To what extent is understanding the evolution of concepts or arguments a precondition for using them effectively? For surely, we constantly use words and ideas in ways which significantly depart from their original meanings, and we need not let the past dictate the future? As Schlegel later comments, "the best way not to be understood or, rather, to be misunderstood, is to use words in their original meanings" (Schlegel, 1991, 20). Can't our ideas depart from their past contexts of use? Must we really turn to history, linguistics or literature to do science or international law, and if not, why must we with philosophy? Is there not something conservative and limiting about Hamann and Herder's retreat back towards language, culture, history, which fundamentally misinterprets the nature of Kant's project? Why not recognise Kant's project to purify reason as a form of linguistic innovation?

Many of these potential objections are reasonable – we can indeed do what we want with language, languages change, and there exist countless formal and technical vocabularies that people have developed for specialised applications, which in turn have shaped the meaning of ordinary terms. As we shall see in chapter five, Hamann and

Herder are particularly attentive to linguistic innovation and change, predominantly through the paradigm case of literature. However, for both of them the crucial question is whether or not Kant can successfully achieve what he sets out to through his project, and this is where they have their doubts. Hamann and Herder contend that philosophy is part of a broader set of linguistic traditions: pre-existing worlds of historically formed, culturally specific and linguistically mediated meanings. In order to have currency in this world, philosophy cannot totally disregard how meaning is created and how it functions, how people make sense. To the extent that Kant wishes his project to be of *general* relevance, he must obtain a less unrealistic conception of how linguistically mediated human understanding actually operates in different forms of life.

If these criticisms of Kant are fair and well founded, what are their implications? How might we rethink Kant's project? Do Hamann and Herder have a more compelling picture of a historical, linguistically mediated reason that we should heed? As we shall see, Hamann, Herder and others will argue that we need to think about reason with and through language, history and experience, rather than subordinating these to formalised rational methods, as they argue that Kant, Wolff, Leibniz and other previous rationalistic philosophers have done. While Hamann and Herder propose a linguistically mediated picture of reason in contrast to the purification of reason that we examined in the previous chapter, their conception of language differs from those associated from the much more widely known linguistic turn in twentieth century analytic philosophy. In the next chapter I shall examine the analytic linguistic turn in more detail, arguing that the picture of language that is advanced retains an interest in abstracting conceptual content and purifying a formalised vocabulary for rational argumentation, at the expense of other capacities of languages.

4. Conceptual Cartographies: Wittgenstein and the Analytic Linguistic Turn

"In order to find the real artichoke we divested it of its leaves." (Wittgenstein, 2001: 164)

Hamann and Herder's linguistic metacritiques of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* suggest that philosophers should turn to language in order to understand how reason is constituted and experience is structured. However, their conceptions of language differ from those of the much better known linguistic turns of the twentieth century. In this chapter I shall outline some of the main features of the linguistic turn in analytic philosophy – focusing on the work of Wittgenstein. On the one hand, this tradition has some important commonalities with the earlier German linguistic turn. On the other hand, it often retains an overly aprioristic conception of language, which – despite Wittgenstein's later work – focuses on an idealised and abstracted conception of language rather than looking at language as an evolving, historically situated, socially constituted institution, which not only serves as a vehicle for designation and the encoding of information, but which also mediates experience and reason, and sustains social worlds.

The Linguistic Turn in Analytic Philosophy

Richard Rorty is widely held to have popularised the phrase "linguistic turn" as it is now often used to refer to developments in English language analytic philosophy in the twentieth century (see, e.g. Hacker, 2007: 132, 2013: 926; Glock, 2008: 121). In his classic 1967 edited volume of essays *The Linguistic Turn*, Rorty says he borrowed the phrase from Gustav Bergmann whom he believed to have coined the term (Rorty, 1992: 9). While both Rorty and Bergmann use the phrase to refer to the turn to language in Anglophone analytic philosophy in the early 20th century, a few contemporary commentators have argued that there is another important and earlier turn to language in philosophy commencing in the eighteenth century, which will be the subject of the next chapter. In this chapter, I will start with a brief outline of some of the main features of the more widely known linguistic turn in Anglophone analytic philosophy in the twentieth century, in order to compare it with the conception of language associated with the eighteenth century linguistic turn in German philosophy. I shall argue, following Taylor, that the analytic linguistic turn ultimately remains committed to an overly idealistic and conceptual picture of language. While the analytic linguistic turn represents an important step towards understanding reason as a linguistically mediated institution, it retains a disproportionate focus on the purification and clarification of language's designative, truth-bearing and informational capacities at the expense of its many other capacities (as discussed in chapters five to seven below).

There is some dispute as to when the linguist turn in analytic philosophy begins. A few commentators claim the turn has its roots in Frege's work in the late nineteenth century (e.g. Dummett, 1993: 5, 7; Williamson, 2005a), as manifested in the "deep

currents driving towards the investigation of thoughts through the analysis of language", the broader implications of which Frege was "not fully conscious" and which he "never explicitly acknowledged" (Dummett, 1993: 6-7). More often it is claimed that the analytic turn to language doesn't really get started until the 1930s (Hacker, 2007, 2013; Glock, 2008: 35; Rorty, 1992), under the influence of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* and his other early work, and manifested - for example - in the works of the Vienna Circle or in the post-war group of thinkers associated with "Oxford philosophy".

What are the main features of this turn to language? Rorty argues that it is characterised by "the view that philosophical problems are problems that may be solved (or dissolved) either by reforming language or by understanding more about the language we presently use" (Rorty, 1992: 3). The linguistic turn is presented as a way to release philosophers from apparent philosophical problems by understanding how they arose through errors, misapplications and misinterpretations of language – such that the task of the linguistic meta-philosopher is essentially therapeutic. The first section of the book presents a range of short pieces concerning "the thesis that philosophical questions are questions of language". The following two sections present a range essays divided into what Rorty considers the two main schools or branches of the linguistic turn – "ideal language philosophy" and "natural language philosophy". I shall contend that the ideal language branch shares many of the same aspirations and problems as the philosophical project to purify reason examined in chapter two, albeit with an interest in refining a conceptual metalanguage suitable for connecting and coordinating scientific research. While the natural language branch advances a broader conception of the different functions language, it does so in a way which focuses on the *hypothetical* rather than *actual* uses and practices of language – and does not account for how

languages evolve, nor for their role in structuring experience or articulating social worlds.

The *Tractatus* and Ideal Language Philosophy

Ideal language philosophy is characterised by an interest in developing formalised systems of language or meta-language that overcome some of the shortcomings of natural language, as well as reforming and clarifying the usage of natural language. The work of thinkers associated with the Vienna Circle can be considered in this vein. In "The Scientific World Conception", the unofficial manifesto for the Vienna Circle which was signed by many of its members and sympathisers, Otto Neurath writes of the search for "a neutral system of formulae", "a total system of concepts" which is "freed from the slag of historical languages", in the service of a "unified science" and the "rational transformation of the social and economic order" (Neurath, 1973). The "neatness and clarity" of such a system is contrasted with the "dark distances and unfathomable depths" of "metaphysical philosophy". Indeed, the aspiration towards a "science free of metaphysics", and the rejection of metaphysics is described as the shared ground and "common goal" of the circle. Given the breadth and diversity of thought associated with the Vienna Circle (see, for example, Uebel, 2014), for present purposes we shall further illustrate the "ideal language" aspirations of the analytic linguistic turn with reference to the work of one figure: Rudolph Carnap.

Carnap said he was deeply influenced in his approach to philosophy by Frege, Russell and Wittgenstein (Coffa, 1993: 207). Upon learning of Russell's proclamation that "all this supposed knowledge in the traditional systems must be swept away, and a

new beginning must be made" Carnap said that he felt that the "appeal had been directed to [him] personally" (208). In particular, he was influenced by the Russellian sentiment that "by means of the study of syntax, we can arrive at considerable knowledge concerning the structure of the world" (Russell, 2013: 347). Drawing on conceptual and notational innovations in formal logic from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Carnap sought to develop a formal meta-language which would provide common ground for the empirical sciences, paving the way for a new "unified science". In this regard Carnap aspired to use a more granular understanding of language to augment a philosophical project which had many similarities with Leibniz and Wolff's universal calculus of thought.

Why was Carnap interested in developing such a formalised meta-language? There were two initial motivations. Firstly, following Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* to separate sense from nonsense, what could be said from that about which one must (ideally) remain silent. Through logical analysis, Carnap sought to prove that the "pretended propositions of metaphysics" were nothing but "empty word arrays" (Carnap in Rorty, 1992: 54), thus – hopefully – liberating philosophers from servitude to futile and meaningless intellectual toil. This impulse, to "tear apart the stagnant, pointless inquiry that called itself philosophy" as Peter Galison puts it, was shared by many others in the Vienna Circle and arguably reflected and encouraged other broadly modernist social, cultural and political movements which sought to clear the debris of tradition, superstition, conservativism and old power structures to make way for new worlds - from constructivism to Bauhaus, from revolutions in physics to experiments in social democracy (Galison, 1990: 713). Making a similar comparison, Hilary Putnam describes Carnap's project as a kind of "futurist intellectual architecture", suggesting

that analytical philosophy "is best understood as part of the larger phenomenon of modernism" with its "extreme form of the rejection of tradition" (Putnam, 1983: 174, 180). In his *Philosophy and Logical Syntax*, Carnap approvingly cites Hume's instruction to "commit […] to the flames" the "sophistry and illusion" of metaphysical texts without "abstract reasoning convening quantity or number" or "experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact and existence" (Carnap, 1935: 36).

Secondly, as well as demarcating sense from nonsense, Carnap wished his project to provide a shared semantic structure to support and connect endeavours promoting the "scientific world view". He argued that philosophy should turn away from traditional metaphysical questions (e.g. concerning ontology, or what there is) and towards the examination of the logical syntax of languages. "The method of logical syntax, that is, the analysis of the formal structure of language as a system of rules", he wrote, "is the only method of philosophy" (Carnap, 1935: 99). Specifically, he singled out the logical syntax of the *language of science* as being of particular importance to philosophers, suggesting that "philosophy is to be replaced by the logic of science" (Carnap, 2001: xiii). According to Carnap, the analysis of the logical syntax of a language entailed the "systematic statement of the formal rules" governing a language, "together with the development of the consequences which follow from those rules" (1). While philosophers wishing to pursue this line of inquiry could borrow lots of material from the past work of logicians, Carnap argued that the critical contribution remained to develop "an exact method for the construction of these sentences about sentences" (Carnap, 2001: xiii).

A committed physicalist, Carnap dedicated himself to the creation of a *Konstitutionssystem* or "system for the constitution of concepts" that would underpin the development of empirical knowledge about the world. Such a system would enable its users to "construct a system of propositions which stand in a certain fundamental coherence with one another" (Carnap in Rorty, 1992: 56), providing a unified basis for both statements about individual perceptions, so- called "protocol sentences", as well as intersubjective enquiry. Much like Llull, Leibniz and Wolff's interest in analytically decomposing complex ideas into fewer simpler characters which could be calculated with, Carnap proposed that all concepts in his proposed language could be "derived from a few fundamental concepts" (Carnap & George, 1969: 5). Drawing connections with the agenda of the Bauhaus movement, Peter Galison describes the Vienna Circle's commitment to what he calls "transparent construction", namely an interest in "building up from simple elements to all higher forms that would, by virtue of the systematic constructional program itself, guarantee the exclusion of the decorative, mystical, or metaphysical" (Galison, 1990: 710).

Like Leibniz, Carnap saw the "system of language" as a "calculus" (Carnap, 2001: 4). He did admit a broader view of language, suggesting that it is "an historically given method of communication, and thus of mutual influence, within a particular group of human beings, and as such is the object of sociology" (5). This entailed acknowledging the existence of other capacities of language beyond the formal semantic properties which he focused on accounting for. Carnap indicated that the formal study of the syntax of language as a system was just one element amongst others – including "the semasiological, … the psychological, and … the sociological" (5). However, he was ultimately unambiguous that the role of the philosopher was to pioneer the formal

syntactical "analysis, interpretation, clarification, or construction of languages of communication", in the service of their logical improvement (Carnap in Rorty, 1992: 83). This did not necessarily entail the study of actual syntax in natural languages, or "descriptive syntax", which would entail looking at the "syntactical properties and relations of empirically given expressions" (Carnap, 2001: 7). It was sufficient to study the "possible arrangements" of elements of a language, which Carnap described as a "wholly analytic" exercise in "combinatorial analysis" (7). Intriguingly in the context of our present inquiry, Carnap said that there were significant overlaps between his project and what he described as the "theory of the structure of experience" (Carnap, Creath, & Nollan, 1987: 470). This echoes a comment from Bergmann who suggested: "The ideal language, as I conceive it, is not a language actually to be spoken but a blue print or schema, complete only in the sense that it must show, in principle, the structure and systematic arrangement of all the major areas of our experience." (Bergman in Rorty, 1992: 134).

As alluded to above, the ideal language branch of the linguistic turn shares many features of the philosophical projects to purify reason. However, rather than considering reason in isolation, Carnap, Wittgenstein and others turned to language precisely in order to understand the capacities and limits of reason. However, they largely retain the same "thin" conception of reason that stood in need of purification and formalisation, at the expense of other capacities of language. Carnap was predominantly interested in a language suitable for scientific observation, and hence advanced a narrow conception of experience as *evidence* and reason as *calculation*. While Carnap does more explicitly recognise and prominently discuss the central role that language plays in organising our thoughts than the philosophers of pure reason, he retains a very similar interest in the

purification of reason: in expressing complex ideas in terms of the combination of a few fundamental concepts, and in deriving a universal, formal method in order to perform rational calculations without ambiguity or disagreement.

Is this a fair characterisation of Carnap's work on language? The legacy and contemporary relevance of different aspects of Carnap's work has been debated. While there appears to be overarching consensus in the secondary literature that Carnap's ideal language project as he conceived it was a failure, there are different views about its main innovations and what made it interesting. Coffa argues that one of his main contributions was the sophisticated articulation of a "conceptual holism" (Coffa, 1993: 218) – anticipating later thinkers who drew on this perspective such as Quine. In a similar vein, some scholars argue that a crucial move was Carnap's turning away from atomism, foundationalism and the representationalism of the "picture theory" of language in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, towards a more flexible "meta-logical" account of language (e.g. Awodey & Carus, 2006). Quite a few others have suggested that despite Carnap's strong attack and dismissal of Heidegger and others from the phenomenological tradition, there is more in common between their respective outlooks (both developing out of a shared neo-Kantian background) than is often assumed (see, e.g. Friedman, 2000, 2002; Stone, 2006). While I agree that his work is indeed more nuanced than it is often made out to be – nevertheless I would maintain that Carnap remains committed to a conception of linguistically mediated rationality which has similar flaws to the philosophical aspirations to purify reason examined in chapter two. While Leibniz and Wolff advance a very narrow conception of reason, Carnap translates this narrow conception of reason into a very narrow conception of language. In the next

section I shall look at the analytic linguistic turns attempts to overcome some of these limitations and to pay attention to other capacities of natural language.

The *Investigations* and Natural Language Philosophy

In this section I will look at the second branch of what Hacker calls the "dual carriageway" of the linguistic turn in analytical philosophy, namely "ordinary language philosophy" – or "natural language philosophy", as Hacker compellingly argues is a more appropriate label. In order to do so we must step back and look at the development of the works of Wittgenstein, a figure who is centrally implicated in both branches of the linguistic turn in analytic philosophy, albeit at different stages in his philosophical work. While the natural language branch does indeed offer a much broader picture of language than the ideal language branch, it nevertheless remains committed to prioritising the designative, conceptual and argumentative capacities of language. Wittgenstein also focuses on the analysis of fictitious accounts of the historical development and social constitution of language as he focuses on advancing a deflationary project of dissolving apparent philosophical problems which arise through language rather than providing a broader philosophical account of reason, language and experience. This means that for Wittgenstein a philosophical analysis of natural language can be largely conducted through thought experiments by linguistically competent speakers from an armchair, rather than developing a philosophical interest in the actual historical development or social constitution of language as a living institution. While there have been significant innovations in post-Wittgensteinian analytical philosophy of language – such as Austin's work on the performative dimensions of language or Geertz's work on "thick descriptions" in ethnography

influenced by Ryle – nevertheless the natural language branch of the linguistic turn remains committed to a narrowly conceptual, static and instrumental picture of language, and remains unable to account for other aspects of language as a living and evolving social institution.

Wittgenstein's 1921 *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (so titled in homage to Baruch Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, at the suggestion of G. E. Moore) was of paramount importance for the ideal language aspirations of the Vienna Circle. The book opens and closes with the now infamous notion that "what can be said at all can be said clearly; and whereof one cannot speak thereof one must be silent" (Wittgenstein, 1922: §7). He contended that "all philosophy" is "a critique of language" (§4.0031), specifically aimed at the "logical clarification of thoughts" (§4.112):

> 4.112 Philosophy aims at the logical clarification of thoughts. Philosophy is not a body of doctrine but an activity. A philosophical work consists essentially of elucidations. Philosophy does not result in 'philosophical propositions', but rather in the clarification of propositions. Without philosophy thoughts are, as it were, cloudy and indistinct: its task is to make them clear and to give them sharp boundaries.

Wittgenstein argued that philosophers should delimit thinking such that within the limit thought could be clarified with the assistance of logical analysis, and outside of the limit would lie "nonsense". He thought that logical analysis (following in the vein of Frege and Russell) provided a powerful tool for the clarification of thought, and that it could help to either resolve or dissolve most philosophical questions and problems of the past. Central to this enterprise was the application of logical analysis to language, as he made the case that "the limits of my language mean the limits of my world" (§5.6).

Hacker outlines six ways in which Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* contributed to the linguistic turn in analytic philosophy (Hacker in Martinich & Sosa, 2001: 76): firstly, by identifying the limits of thought with the limits of language; secondly, by focusing on the logical analysis of sentences; thirdly, by showing how metaphysical assertions attempt to transgress the limits of language and therefore the limits of sense; fourthly, by contributing to the analysis of "the general propositional form", beyond any language in particular; fifthly, undertaking the logical analysis of linguistic descriptions of phenomena; and sixthly and finally, investigating logical necessity by means of the analysis of symbolism. The *Tractatus* was programmatic and provided the direction of travel for the "ideal language" branch of the linguistic turn in Vienna, Cambridge and beyond. The focus of this early period was the development of an analytical method for philosophers to untether themselves from obsolete concerns by analysing the structure of language, drawing on tools such as "truth tables" and propositional formulae, in which form some of the central arguments of the book are made. This is the sense in which Putnam comments that analytical philosophy can be considered modernist: as a kind of liberation from the philosophical traditions of the past, by means of a much simpler and more scientific analytical vocabulary – a calculus of thought that is constructed through attentiveness to the logical and conceptual structures of language.

A major shift of focus and approach occurred in Wittgenstein's work after he returned from a break from philosophy in 1929. The extent of this shift – and whether there is an unbridgeable gulf versus a salvageable continuity – has been widely debated in recent Wittgenstein scholarship (see, e.g. Crary & Read, 2000). In the current context it will serve our purposes to characterise this shift and to explore its repercussions for the development of the linguistic turn in analytical philosophy, setting aside the debate

about the extent of continuity versus change. The *Philosophical Investigations* (first published in 1953) was the centrepiece of this new agenda, setting into motion a fresh constellation of concerns for a generation of philosophers, much as the *Tractatus* had done for thinkers in Cambridge in Vienna. One of the big moves of the *Investigations* was to transition away from the construction of a parsimonious yet expressively adequate *formal logical meta-language*, towards a richer and more nuanced philosophical account of the many different ways in which language is actually used. The *Tractatus* contains a kernel of this sentiment that that the philosophers should be more attentive how language is put to work in different settings with its suggestion that "the tacit conventions on which the understanding of everyday language depends are enormously complicated" (Wittgenstein, 1922: §4.022). This interest in the concrete practices, conventions and institutions of natural language will become paramount in the *Investigations*, which can be read as a multi-layered dialectical exploration of the philosophical implications of a more comprehensive and wide-ranging vision of natural language than had been undertaken by analytic philosophers in previous decades.

In one of his central metaphors in the *Investigations*, Wittgenstein compares language to an ancient city:

> Our language may be seen as an ancient city: a maze of little streets and squares, of old and new houses, and of houses with additions from various periods; and this surrounded by a multitude of new boroughs with straight regular streets and uniform houses. (Wittgenstein, 2001: I, §18)

In this city there are different "suburbs" for different kinds of language: each with their own vocabularies, sentence structures, and ways of using words. Language, like a city, is diverse and has developed over many generations. Parts of it remain unchanged for

centuries, reflecting circumstances which we may now have forgotten about. Its many architectural styles reflect a plethora of different functions and types of human activity. Throughout the book, Wittgenstein highlights the stark contrast between formal philosophical conceptions of language, and how it is actually used in different settings. Wittgenstein's *Investigations* can read as a series of "weird little imaginary dialogues with himself", as the late novelist David Foster Wallace puts it (Wallace, 2007), as he Socratically interrogates different inadequate and one-sided philosophical conceptions of language, aided by impressionistic sketches, architectural drafts, road maps and schematic diagrams of the city of "language".

He targets philosophical interpretations of language which aim to reduce it to a single function, which aim to eliminate its imperfections, or which aim to reformulate what is meaningful using a parsimonious and expressively adequate logical language – and discard what is left as superfluous. For example, he looks at philosophers' claims that "individual words in language name objects" (I, §1), that "every word in language signifies something" (I, §13), that "every assertion contains an assumption" (I, §22) or that "the purpose of a language is to express thoughts" (I, §501). He goes on to explore these claims by representing them in basic models, or "language games", iteratively adding complexity, and exposing their flaws, limitations, inadequacies, and one-sidedness using metaphors, examples, and anecdotes. Augustine's picture of language at the beginning of the *Investigations* assumes that all words are like basic nouns which refer to objects, or like people's names – but what do words like "red", or "five" refer to (I, §1)? Frege thinks that all sentences are essentially assertoric, and can be expressed in the form "it is asserted that such-and-such is the case". But if we prefix every sentence with "is it asserted that", does this prefix not become superfluous? This is rather like

saying that we can express every sentence as a question answered by "yes", hence language consists of nothing but questions (I, §22). Language, Wittgenstein suggests, does more than one kind of thing.

He compares language to a toolbox containing different tools for different purposes (I, §11). Philosophers often try to posit the essential function of all the tools, perhaps suggesting that "all tools modify something". But, he asks, what do the ruler, the glue pot or the nails modify (I, §14)? Alternately he takes the case of controls in the cabin of a locomotive – which all do different things, despite their apparently uniform appearance. While philosophers of language often espouse what we might effectively consider a form of functional monism (or monomania), instead he urges us to compare these functionally flat portraits of language (including, he says, his own work in the *Tractatus*) with the multiplicity of different ways that language can be used:

> Giving orders, and obeying them –
>
> Describing the appearance of an object, or giving its measurements –
>
> Constructing an object from a description (a drawing) –
>
> Reporting an event –
>
> Speculating about the event –
>
> Forming and testing a hypothesis –
>
> Presenting the results of an experiment in tables and diagrams –
>
> Making up a story; and reading it –
>
> Play-acting –
>
> Singing catches –
>
> Guessing riddles –
>
> Making a joke; telling it –
>
> Solving a problem in practical arithmetic –

> Translating from one language into another –
>
> Requesting, thanking, cursing, greeting, praying. (I, §23)

While philosophers imply that language can be reduced to one or two fundamental operations, Wittgenstein cautions that actually words function differently in different contexts, and philosophers should spend more time surveying and scrutinising the different kinds of contexts in which language is used before assuming that they are reducible to a simple model. Words possess an apparent simplicity, like the tools in the toolbox or controls for a train, which may mislead us into thinking they all do similar things whereas in actual fact they possess many different functions (I, §12, §14). Against the over-simple modelling of language undertaken by his predecessors and colleagues – including Frege, Russell and the Vienna Circle – Wittgenstein writes: "a main cause of philosophical disease – an unbalanced diet: one nourishes one's thinking with only one kind of example" (I, §593). He was reportedly at one point planning to give the *Investigations* the subtitle "I'll teach you differences" quoting a line from *King Lear* (Malcolm, 1981). However, it is worth noting that the toolbox and train controls metaphors both convey an instrumental conception of language as a kind of communicative tool to be used by human beings, rather than accounting for the ways in which language fundamentally shapes our experience and provides the conditions of possibility for our sense of being in the world – as, for example, discussed by Heidegger and Gadamer. The portrayal of language as a tool to be used for various purposes (as per the examples above) broadens the lens of philosophical inquiry from the semantic content of linguistic utterances to how these utterances function in their *possible uses* in different social settings. However, it stops short of reflecting on the *actual role* that languages play in articulating the worlds of which these social settings are part.

Wittgenstein argues that what philosophers may mistake for dispensable contingency is actually part of language's wealth:

> The more narrowly we examine actual language, the sharper becomes the conflict between it and our own requirement. (For the crystalline purity of logic was, of course, not a result of investigation: it was a requirement.) The conflict becomes intolerable; the requirement is now in danger of becoming empty. – We have got on to slippery ice where there is no friction and so in a certain sense the conditions are ideal, but also, just because of that, we are unable to walk. We want to walk: so we need friction. Back to the rough ground! (I, §107)

Analytical philosophers in the tradition that influenced Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* aspired to discover the "essence" or "underlying logic" of language – whether by explicating the logical structures inherent in our natural languages (with all of their imperfections and ambiguities) or by constructing new logical languages. But, Wittgenstein argues, there is no secret essence, no hidden underlying structure waiting to be discovered. Language "already lies open to view" (I, §92), and "since everything lies open to view there is nothing to explain" (I, §126). The philosophical search for the "essence of language" is a pernicious wild goose chase. Like the missive in Edgar Allan Poe's *The Purloined Letter*, language is in plain view, hidden from philosophers only because they expect it to be elaborately concealed. Furthermore, they are like the man who killed the golden goose to get to the source of its golden eggs – striving to rid language of the same ambiguities and roughnesses that give it its expressive wealth and power. "In order to find the real artichoke", Wittgenstein writes, "we divested it of its leaves" (I, §164).

Wittgenstein's "language games" are used to demonstrate the inadequacy of many traditional philosophical conceptions of what language is and how it works. For example, one consists of a scenario based on a referential theory of meaning – which holds that the meanings of words are the objects to which they correspond. He posits a language consisting of the words "block", "pillar", "slab", and "beam", for a builder and an assistant who are constructing something using these materials. He then examines how we may be tempted to see this as a complete language, by making assumptions based on our own much richer and more developed language – such as that by "Slab!", the builder really means "Bring me a slab!". Thus he writes: "It is primarily the apparatus of our ordinary language, of our word-language, that we call language; and then other things by analogy or comparability with this" (I, §494). Wittgenstein often emphasises that in these scenarios there are various crucial steps missing – and hence indicates the gap between natural language, and these philosophical models.

One of Wittgenstein's most important points in the *Investigations* is that "the meaning of a word is its use in the language" (I, §43). As he writes later in the book, "Every sign by itself seems dead. What gives it life? – In use it is alive. Is life breathed into it there? – Or is the use its life?" (I, §432). Along similar lines, in notes published in *The Blue and Brown Books* he writes: "But if we had to name anything which is the life of the sign, we should have to say that it was its use." (Wittgenstein, 1958: 5). The meanings of words, the meanings of signs, are dependent on *practices* and *institutions* of interpretation that we learn when we learn a language. We must *learn* to look from "wrist to fingertip" when somebody points at something, not vice versa (Wittgenstein, 2001: I, §185). There is nothing intrinsic about this gesture which means that we should interpret it this way. He says that "a person goes by the sign-post only in so far as there

exists a regular use of sign posts, a custom" (I, §198). Knowing how to obey a rule is to know how to follow a "custom", an "institution" - and to understand a language "means to be master of a technique" (I, §199).

These uses and practices are not permanently fixed, but are subject to change, to renegotiation. Language is a living set of practices evolving with and embedded within linguistic communities, reflecting their manifold forms of life. As Wittgenstein writes in the *Investigations*: "We are talking about the spatial and temporal phenomenon of language, not about some non-spatial, non-temporal chimera" (I, §108). In *On Certainty* which was finished shortly before his death in 1951, he wrote along similar lines: "When language-games change, then there is a change in concepts, and with the concepts the meanings of words change" (Wittgenstein, 1975: §65). While allusions to the history and development of language in Wittgenstein's work are relatively scarce, in Part II of the Investigations he gives this question a more extended treatment, which it is worth quoting here:

> If the formation of concepts can be explained by facts of nature, should we not be interested, not in grammar, but rather in that nature which is the basis of grammar? - Our interest certainly includes the correspondence between concepts and very general facts of nature. (Such facts as mostly do not strike us because of their generality.) But our interest does not fall back on these possible causes of the formation of concepts; we are not doing natural science; nor yet natural history – since we can also invent fictitious natural history for our purposes.

> I am not saying: if such-and-such facts of nature were different people would have different concepts (in the sense of a hypothesis). But: if anyone believes that certain concepts are absolutely the correct ones, and that having different ones would mean not realizing something that we realize – then let him imagine very general facts of nature to be different from what we are used to, and

the formation of concepts different from the usual ones will become intelligible to him.

(Wittgenstein, 2001: II, §xii)

While he does not advocate that philosophers should be interested in the development of language *per se* – Wittgenstein maintains that it is important to recognise that it is a matter of contingency that language has developed the way it has. He also proposes the use of "fictitious natural history" – looking at how things *might have* developed, rather than looking at how they *actually did* develop. This is another weakness of the analytic linguistic turn as compared with the German linguistic turn, which exhibits a much stronger interest in the *actual* historical and social aspects of language. Perhaps this residual commitment to a "science of the possible" is partly due to Wittgenstein's overarching objective to dissolve apparent philosophical problems – as opposed to examining other dimensions of language and the role it plays in social, political and cultural life. Wittgenstein also focuses much more on what Saussure will call the synchronic as opposed to diachronic aspects of language – and does not focus on the question of how languages change and how linguistic innovation is possible (as, e.g. Herder and Heidegger discuss in their work).

In the *Investigations*, Wittgenstein writes that philosophy aims to supply "remarks on the natural history of human beings; [...] observations which no one has doubted, but which have escaped remark only because they are always before our eyes" (I, §415). In *On Certainty*, he suggests that there is a core of assumptions in language that in practice we do not doubt (unless we are engaging in philosophical speculation or have psychological issues). He suggests there is an "inherited background", "a kind of mythology", "a whole system of propositions" which is passed down to us when we

learn language (Wittgenstein, 1975: §94, §95, §141). He suggests this is like a river –
with some parts that are very fluid, like the waters, some parts which are more fixed,
like the sandy river bed, and some parts which are practically immutable, like the hard
rock of the riverbank (§97, §99). Elsewhere he suggests that certain propositions "stand
fast" like "the axis around which a body rotates" (§152). These are propositions which
we are implicitly taught when we learn language – and are more practices, ways of
acting, than things which we consciously learn. It is in this sense that, quoting Goethe's
Faust, he writes: "*Im Anfang war die Tat*" ("in the beginning was the deed").
Wittgenstein claims that "essence is expressed in grammar" (Wittgenstein, 2001: I,
§371) and that we can think of "theology as grammar" (I, §373), a remark which – as
we shall see – is reminiscent of Hamann and Nietzsche's views about the relationship
between language and God.

In the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein argues that philosophical problems arise from the
misuse and misunderstanding of language. As discussed above, this is a view that
Carnap and others in the Vienna Circle also share, partly under Wittgenstein's influence.
This position is developed much more extensively in the *Investigations*. Wittgenstein's
views on this topic are intimately connected with his overarching vision about the role
and purpose of philosophy. In the *Investigations* he says that "philosophical problems
arise when language goes on holiday" (I, §38) – and that philosophy is "a battle against
the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of our language" (I, §109). "When we do
philosophy", he writes, "we are like savages, primitive people, who hear the expressions
of civilized men, put a false interpretation on them, and then draw the queerest
conclusions from it" (I, §194). For example, philosophers have often take our figurative
ways of speaking literally, mistaking the vehicle of the metaphor for its tenor – thinking

of "time as a queer medium" or "mind as a queer kind of being" (I, §196). Given this danger, Wittgenstein proposes that we must scrutinise the way philosophers use language – to ensure that they do not interpret ordinary language in highly unusual ways.[9] In *On Certainty* he suggests how strange philosophers' use of the word "know" is. He gives an example of two people sitting in a garden and one repeatedly saying to the other "I know that that's a tree". Without knowing that they are doing philosophy, we may think they are crazy (Wittgenstein, 1975: §467). To remedy this, in the *Investigations*, he suggests:

> When philosophers use a word – "knowledge", "being", "object", "I", "proposition", "name" – and try to grasp the essence of the thing, one must always ask oneself: is the word ever actually used this way in the language which is its original home? (Wittgenstein, 2001: I, §116)

Wittgenstein suggests that philosophers stray from normal to abnormal uses of language – and the "more abnormal the case, the more doubtful it becomes what we are to say" (I, §142). To give an example, we talk, in an ordinary sense, of the different states it is possible for a machine to be in: its different "possible actions" or "possible states". From this the philosopher may infer that the different possible states are in some "mysterious sense" already present (I, §193, §194).

To give another example, he suggests that philosophers may infer that there is something in common between things that we designate with the same term – some

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[9] Though as several commentators have pointed out, this is not to say we must draw a firm distinction between everyday and philosophical language. For present purposes I mean to draw attention to the contrast between cases which we are familiar with and very unusual philosophical cases, such as those discussed by Wittgenstein in *On Certainty*. For more on this see Baker, 2002.

essential property which can be described. In *The Blue and Brown Books* and the *Investigations* he examines the case of games. Philosophers say "there must be something common, or they would not be called 'games'", but Wittgenstein urges us to "look and see" – arguing that there is not a common denominator, but rather a whole series of similarities and relationships (I, §66). He says these *Familienähnlichkeiten*, family resemblances, are like overlapping fibres in a thread – and there is no reason to assume that there is one fibre which runs through the whole thread:

> And we extend our concept of number as in spinning a thread we twist fibre on fibre. And the strength of the thread does not reside in the fact that some one fibre runs through its whole length, but in the overlapping of many fibres. But if someone wished to say: "There is something common to all these constructions – namely the disjunction of all their common properties" – I should reply: Now you are only playing with words. One might as well say: "Something runs through the whole thread – namely the continuous overlapping of these fibres". (I, §67)

The *Investigations* are filled with these and other kinds of philosophical mistakes which arise from misunderstanding our ways of speaking. Wittgenstein thinks it is the role of philosophy to identify and eradicate these mistakes. However, his vision is one of a therapeutic philosophy that helps to show "the fly out of the fly-bottle" (I, §309). He says that philosophers, *qua* philosophers, should not "interfere with language" and that philosophy should leave "everything as it is" (I, §124). He holds that "in philosophy we do not draw conclusions" (I, §599), nor do we try to "advance theses", for if we did "it would never be possible to debate them, because everyone would agree to them" (I, §128). In *The Blue and Brown Books* he suggests that

> It is wrong to say that in philosophy we consider an ideal language as opposed to our ordinary one. For this makes it appear as though we thought we could improve on ordinary language. But

ordinary language is all right. Whenever we make up 'ideal languages' it is not in order to replace our ordinary language by them; but just to remove some trouble caused in someone's mind by thinking that he has got hold of the exact use of a common word. That is also why our method is not merely to enumerate actual usages of words, but rather deliberately to invent new ones, some of them because of their absurd appearance. (Wittgenstein, 1958: 28)

Wittgenstein contends that philosophers should not aim to *solve* philosophical problems, but rather *dissolve* them by highlighting at what point a wrong turn was taken, giving rise to the misinterpretations and mistakes that made them appear in the first place. In this vein he argues:

> Our investigation is a grammatical one. Such an investigation sheds light on our problem by clearing misunderstandings away. Misunderstandings concerning the use of words, caused, among other things, by certain analogies between the forms of expression in different regions of language. (I, §90)

If philosophical problems can be compared to illnesses, Wittgenstein argues that we should consider philosophy to be a range of therapies to treat them, to make them go away. He writes that: "The real discovery is the one that gives philosophy peace, so that it is no longer tormented by questions which bring itself into question." (I, §133). Wittgenstein thinks philosophy should try to identify the kinds of misunderstandings of our way of speaking – to reveal "disguised nonsense" as "patent nonsense" (I §464). He wants to debunk unusual philosophical and metaphysical interpretations of language, and to restore ordinary meanings of words. "What we do", Wittgenstein says, "is to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use" (I, §116). Hence the philosopher must carefully examine the multiplicity of contexts in which words are used, nourish their diet with lots of examples – and try to see where we have gone

wrong. We must strive to "command a clear view of the use of our words", to gain a "perspicuous representation" (I, §122) and we must *look* to see how words function, rather than guessing. In doing so he leaves behind what he describes as the "illusion" of logical analysis (which he shared in the *Tractatus*), which seeks to uncover the "essence" of thought comprised of "the purest crystal", "prior to all experience, [running] through all experience" and unaffected by "empirical cloudiness or uncertainty" (I, §97). He develops an avowed interest in what he describes variously as an "anthropologische Betrachtungsweise" or an "ethnologische Betrachtungsweise" – an anthropological or ethnological method – as a legitimate part of philosophical enterprise (see, e.g. North, 1999: 39; Gálvez, 2010). As we shall see, this anthropological interest in how language is used and deployed in human societies is also an important feature of the eighteenth century linguistic turn. However, Wittgenstein's "historicism without history", as Hacker aptly calls it (Hacker in Gálvez, 2010: 15ff), stops short of the philosophical interest in the eighteenth century linguistic turn not just in *fictitious* histories to inform conceptual and theoretical analysis, but in the *actual* histories, development and contemporary usages of language and concepts.

Alluding to the metaphor of language as an ancient city (as discussed above), he says that philosophical problems have the form "I don't know my way about", and urges philosophers to "look around" and see where they have taken a wrong turn (I, §123). In his view, philosophy should consist of assembling reminders to prevent philosophers from getting lost or confused (I, §127) – and in this sense we might read the *Investigations* as a kind of catalogue or cartography of different recurring kinds of errors to be avoided, as well as guidance on how to unravel knots, to see things clearly.

Hacker summarises some of the crucial differences between the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations* as follows:

> The *Tractatus* was possessed by a vision of the crystalline purity of the logical forms of thought, language, and the world, the *Investigations* was imbued with a sharpened awareness of the motley of language, the deceptive forms of which lead us into confusion. The *Tractatus* advocated conceptual geology, hoping to disclose the ineffable essences of things by depth analysis of language, the *Investigations* practiced conceptual topography, aiming to dissolve philosophical problems by a patient description of familiar linguistic facts. (Martinich & Sosa, 2001: 81)

While the analytic turn to language should be considered to be more than mere footnotes to Wittgenstein, charting the development of his work nevertheless captures some of the most important differences between the "ideal language" and "ordinary language" (or "natural language") branches.

Wittgenstein's turn away from the "ideal" formal and artificial languages intended to clarify the use of natural language or to support the production and systematisation of scientific knowledge and towards taking "ordinary" or "natural" language much more seriously as an object of philosophical analysis was immensely influential amongst philosophers in post-war Oxford. These thinkers were influenced by many of Wittgenstein's insights – but, as Hacker says, ordinary language philosophy in Oxford was "more of a flourishing field fertilized by Wittgenstein's ideas than bare soil in which Wittgenstein's seeds grew" (Hacker, 2013). In his historical account of the analytic linguistic turn, Hacker posits four main centres of gravity of ordinary language philosophy in Oxford: the "logical geography" of Ryle; the "linguistic phenomenology" of Austin; the "linguistic botanising" of Grice; and the "connective analysis" of

Strawson. For present purposes I shall provide a brief account of the contributions of Ryle and Austin – two of the most important and influential figures of these four developments – to further illustrate some of the main features of the ordinary language branch of the analytic linguistic turn in post-war Oxford.

Ryle appealed to the notion of logical "geography" or "cartography" to map the compatibilities and incompatibilities of different words and phrases in order to see where philosophers go wrong. In a metaphor with clear parallels to Wittgenstein's notion of language as a city, Ryle said that members of a linguistic community were like "villagers" and the role of the philosopher was to chart the structure and composition of the terrain in which they operate. He strove to use the study of networks of concepts in order to reveal and correct systemic errors in philosophical attempts to make sense of different aspects of our world – such as, he most famously contended, the "category mistakes" we make when thinking about the mind (Ryle, 2009). Much as Wittgenstein had challenged the philosophical tendency to try to boil down their conceptions of language such that it is only considered to possess one or a small number of functions, Ryle argued against the aspiration towards "thin descriptions". Under the "thinnest description" we might say that all the ancient geometer Euclid is doing when he is at work is "muttering to himself a few geometrical words and phrases, or scrawling on paper or in the sand a few rough and fragmentary lines" (Ryle, 2009: 494ff; cf. Ryle, 1968). With a thin description a meaningful wink might be indistinguishable from an accidental twitch. Thicker description provides us with a greater sense of *context* to be able to make sense of actions or utterances. This notion was later taken up by the anthropologist Clifford Geertz who explicitly drew on Ryle and Wittgenstein in order to argue for the importance of a broader sense of context for interpreting culture in

anthropology, as an antidote to positivist, behavioural or overly scientistic approaches which strip objects of study from their contexts (Geertz, 1973).

J. L. Austin became renowned for analysing subtle distinctions between different usages of words for the purposes of philosophical analysis. For example, he undertook a detailed survey of different kinds of excuses and their various functions and contexts. A crucial contribution of his work was to look beyond what he called "constative utterances", or utterances about which we might make truth claims, and "performative utterances" which do not simply aspire towards true descriptions of states of affairs, but *perform*, *act* or *intervene* in the world for a variety of different purposes. His widely influential *How to Do Things with Words* aimed to broaden philosophers' conceptions of language – in particular introducing the notion of what he called "speech acts" (Austin, 1975). He distinguished between what he described as a "locutionary act" (e.g. the phrase "Are you going to finish that sandwich?" as a linguistic utterance), its "illocutionary force" (e.g. the performative function of this phrase beyond its semantic content, such as to request the remains of said sandwich), and its "perlocutionary effect" (e.g. the effective persuasion of the sandwich eater to hand over said sandwich or to finish it more speedily, etc.). In an address to the Aristotelian Society in 1956, Austin argued that language is a "common stock of words" embodying distinctions drawn and connections made "in the lifetimes of many generations" (Austin, 1956: 8). Like Wittgenstein and Ryle, he argued that understanding these different distinctions about how language is used and the contexts in which it is deployed is essential in order to unpick and resolve philosophical problems. He argued the patient and careful study of these distinctions and connections is likely more likely to lead to pertinent philosophical

insight than the "favoured alternative method", namely what philosophers happen to "think up in our armchairs of an afternoon" (Austin, 1956: 8).

The Limits of the Analytic Linguistic Turn

In this section we have looked at some of the main characteristics of the linguistic turn in analytic philosophy – from "ideal language" varieties inspired by Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* (including Carnap's work to construct a logical syntax), to "natural language" varieties in the vein of Wittgenstein's *Investigations* (such as those espoused by Ryle and Austin). What is the legacy of the linguistic turn in analytic philosophy? A great deal of contemporary analytic philosophy in the English speaking world draws on figures, works and insights from this tradition. On the one hand, that there is a much to be admired in the analytic linguistic turn – from the internationalist ambition and progressive modernism of the Vienna Circle, to the dialectical breadth and contextual sensitivity of the later works of Wittgenstein, to the seminal contribution of Austin's notions of performativity and speech acts.

However, on the other hand, there are also several critical flaws and shortcomings. As Wittgenstein and others very convincingly argue, earlier proponents of the "ideal language" branch are often overzealous in their drive for logical and conceptual purification. While such a drive for purity and parsimony might be valuable in the context of creating artificial languages that are useful for performing certain functions in specific domains of enquiry (e.g. formalised vocabularies for biomedical research), it is less likely to be useful when generally applied to the study of all languages in all settings. This is partly due to what might be considered an inadequate conception of meaning. The representationalist "picture theory" of meaning as formulated in the

Tractatus is intended to make sense of only a very small sub-portion of how language is used – namely cases focusing on description and truth assertion. His earlier commitment to atomism means that he believed that all other more complex and nuanced applications of language could be understood as elaborate assemblages (or misapplications) of simple descriptive or assertoric utterances. Such a conception of language risks *de facto* dismissing vast swathes of linguistic usage as redundant, shoehorning linguistic utterances into over-simplistic metalanguages, or adopting a very wide-ranging principled quietism beyond that which formal models are able to account for.

What can the "ideal language" branch of the analytic linguistic turn bring to philosophical inquiry about "equality", "nature" or "work"? The forms of analysis of early "ideal language" thinkers drew heavily on mathematics and logic and placed a corresponding emphasis on structures of rational argumentation that were amenable to a wide variety of different inputs. Elements within these systems could be arbitrarily and flexibly defined and re-defined, which was part of their power and appeal. If we establish clear definitions and conditions for, for example, "justice" or "art", focusing on what is essential and stripping out what is contingent, and if we have consensus around these definitions, then we can calculate with them as per the Leibnizian dream. If concepts are not amenable to clear definition then maybe we should either break them down into meaningful chunks, or retire them in favour of concepts which can be meaningfully defined. Either way, the philosophical task was more narrowly re-defined in terms of the construction of an engine for argumentation, the logical apparatus for the calculation and manipulation of concepts that were provided by society, in the service of a rational-scientific world-view. Language was simply the medium by means of which

messy social and cultural meanings were sorted out and fed into the engine. If meanings were not amenable to analysis, then this was surely the fault of history or society, not the philosophical analyst whose role consisted in the provision of robust argumentative equipment. The net result of this project in the medium term was a massive scaling back and deferral of philosophical ambition, and a huge loss of social, cultural and political relevance. Philosophy was understood as a specialist technical task, and generations of thinkers joined the search for necessary and sufficient conditions for concepts for which no such things could be generally obtained, and into the symbolic manipulation of versions of concepts only nominally resembling the contested terms that were actually put to work in a world in different settings.

The "ordinary language" or "natural language" branch of the analytic linguistic turn addressed some of these problems by providing a more compelling account of meaning, as well as a less militantly purist account what constituted legitimate philosophical argumentation. By being less narrow minded about the many diverse functions of language, and by looking towards meaning-in-the-making through being attentive to the manifold forms and contexts of use of language they opened up the terrain for more hermeneutically compelling and less esoteric and conceptually implausible engagements with the role of words in the world. However, I shall argue that there were still several important limitations with this approach. While they were (at least in principle) more open to other approaches and sources of evidence for thinking about meaning than their "ideal language" predecessors and colleagues – such as Wittgenstein's stated interest in anthropology, or an interest in natural language that began to direct philosophical attention towards areas which overlapped with the disciplinary concerns of linguistics – I would nevertheless contend that they did not go

far enough, and remained overly constrained in their conception of the role of the philosophy. In particular, I would argue that notions such as "linguistic competence" and "philosophy as therapy" may have held them back. The notion of "linguistic competence" meant that the philosophical engagements with language and meaning could remain at the level of "armchair analyst". In a sense the focus on competence rather than deployment implied that it was more important to understand *possible uses* of language and of concepts than *actual uses*. In this sense, the various forms of "logical geography", "linguistic phenomenology", "linguistic botanising" and "connective analysis" that issued from the turn to natural language remained committed to a basic picture of an argumentative structure inherited from the "ideal language" branch, attenuated and enriched with snapshots of the nuance and complexity of language derived from the *hypothetical exploration* of what it is logically or conceptually possible to do with words.

This focus on *types* of usage and conceptual *possibility* meant that thinkers associated with the "natural language" branch stopped short of more substantive exploration of our actual linguistic infrastructure in several crucial ways. Firstly, the basic picture of "ordinary language" that many thinkers associated with this branch espouse is arguably historically impoverished. There is little sense of the historical contingencies and contestations that underpin the production of meanings, concepts and modes of argumentation, nor the extent to which language as a complex and hugely diverse edifice is deeply interwoven into many different aspects of human life and experience, as *historically situated* phenomena. In many cases the meanings and usages of words today will exhibit a profound variance from their meanings and usages in the past. This is not only because the uses of words changes like the uses of individual

objects – but also because of the complex networks of interdependencies between the connotations of different words (as we shall see in the following chapters, the conceptions of languages that came out of the eighteenth century linguistic turn were arguably more attuned to these aspects – as exemplified in literary language). Many ordinary language philosophers retained something like a picture of language as a *conceptual system*, albeit a more complex and nuanced system than the artificial metalanguages of their logicist contemporaries and forebears (as discussed in chapter two). This prematurely closed off more substantive exploration of the contested meanings and multivalence of linguistic terms, as well as more serious engagements with historical, social and cultural research that might serve to challenge or complicate the apparently stable, steady and commonsensical grasp of the linguistically competent analyst.

Secondly, many ordinary language philosophers in practice restricted themselves to one language and an arguably limited social, cultural and geographical base of evidence about its contexts of deployment. As we shall examine in the next section, the philological and theological roots of the eighteenth century linguistic turn, informed by the more widespread dissemination and translation of texts from significantly different linguistic traditions, gave it with a comparative breadth and subtlety that left it better equipped to more seriously examine the phenomenological and world-making functions of language – in particular the way in which language gives form not only to reason, but also to experience. Insofar as it possessed a vision of universality, this was predicated on piecemeal translation and intercultural communication to compose a universality that is held together by communicative action which must be proactively maintained rather than one of the discovery or formalisation of a latent order that lay beneath the

contingent semantic formations of natural language (as per the ideal language branch), or the universal cultural praxis of therapeutic restraint informed by a lightweight linguistic cartography to "look around", albeit from the comfort of one's armchair as a competent linguistic speaker (as per the natural language branch). The natural language philosophy in the analytical tradition that began to be known outside of the academy in the mid-twentieth century became much more marginal over the following decades. There have been major theoretical contributions from thinkers whose work was shaped by the linguistic turn – from Donald Davidson to Richard Rorty – yet many have questioned the value of the philosophy of language in the analytical tradition. As Hacker laments,

> At its worst, analytic philosophy moved into a characteristically scholastic phase in which pedantry displaced vision, and all that was left of an era of philosophical achievement were empty forms – the employment of the technical tools of analytic philosophy. (Hacker, 2013)

While some recent analytic philosophers such as Timothy Williamson have questioned the value of the linguistic turn – making the case for an "armchair philosophy" which aspires to "analyse thought directly without taking a diversion through the analysis of language" through things like "thought experiments" and "counterfactual thinking" (Williamson, 2005a; see also a scathing critique of this position in Hacker, 2009) – there has also been a recent resurgence of interest in the relevance of the natural language branch to contemporary philosophy (see, for example, Baz, 2012; Laugier, 2013).

To take the linguistic turn seriously is to realise the vital role that language plays in articulating social worlds. The extent to which linguistic competence is adequate to

understand how language shapes the composition of these worlds is highly questionable. As I shall discuss further in my concluding chapter – on the one hand I will argue that more serious engagements with social and historical research is one route towards a more compelling philosophical conception of language. On the other hand, I shall argue that by letting go of the largely analytical and deflationary conception of philosophy in the analytic linguistic turn (following Wittgenstein's notion of philosophy as a form of therapy to dissolve apparent problems), we can open up space for reflecting on the expressive, performative and normative dimensions of philosophy as a form of linguistic praxis. In the following three chapters I shall contend that the linguistic turn in the eighteenth century is a fertile resource for rethinking contemporary philosophical conceptions of language, providing insights which can contribute to a more ambitious agenda on both of these fronts.

5. Remediating Rationality: Hamann, Herder and the German Linguistic Turn

"Language is creative; to it we owe the existences and structures that populate our world-versions." (Hacking, 2002: 139)

In contrast to the better known linguistic turn in analytic philosophy which I examined in the previous chapter, in this chapter I look at the turn to language in eighteenth century German philosophy. While the former often retains a focus on certain aspects of language which derive from philosophical projects to perfect and purify reason (as discussed in chapter two) – namely its designative and information encoding capacities – I argue that the latter offers the basis for a more compelling account of how language gives form to both reason and experience. The eighteenth century German linguistic turn reaches its apex in the linguistic metacritiques of Hamann and Herder. Their works fuse the historical and proto-anthropological conception of language arising from discussions around the Berlin Academy (informed by a broad constellation of aesthetic, theological, naturalistic and political concerns), with innovations from Kant's transcendental philosophy which strive to overcome both the Scylla of empty rationalisms and the Charybdis of flat empiricisms by looking towards conditions of possibility for reason and experience. Hamann and Herder suggest that these conditions of possibility can be found in language, as a historically and socially situated fabric of thought. While Forster advances a "narrow expressivism" on the basis of his reading of Herder (Forster, 2010), I argue for a "broad expressivism"

that encompasses not only written and verbal language (narrowly conceived), but also other forms of what Taylor characterises as "meaningful media" (Taylor, 1985). The chapter is divided into four sections looking at: (i) debates about language around the Berlin Academy that informed Hamann and Herder's works, (ii) Hamann's views on language, (iii) Herder's views on language, and (iv) how Hamann and Herder's views contribute to an alternative philosophical agenda around language to that which I examined in the previous chapter on the analytic linguistic turn.

Language in the Air

With a few notable exceptions, the eighteenth century turn to language has remained marginal in English language philosophy. One of the most prominent figures associated with the popularisation of this tradition – and in particular the works of Hamann and Herder – is Isaiah Berlin. He portrayed Hamann and Herder as part of an irrationalist "Counter-Enlightenment". His work on this topic commenced in the 1960s, but much of it was not published until the 1990s (see, e.g., Berlin, 1965, 1993, 1994, 1999, 2013). As we shall see later in this chapter, other philosophers and critics challenged his portrayal of Hamann and Herder as being irrationalist, contending their work could more fruitfully read as contributions to thought associated with the Enlightenment rather than as a sharp departure from it (see, e.g. Bayer, 2012; Lukács, 1980; O'Flaherty & Berlin, 1993). Berlin's student Charles Taylor was another prominent figure in promoting historical and philosophical readings which placed Hamann and Herder at the centre of a turn to language in the eighteenth century, which was also read as a pre-cursor to romanticism and "hermeneutic" philosophers such as Hans-Georg Gadamer (Taylor, 1985, 1995). Taylor helped to give rise to a reading of what he called the

"Herder-Humboldt view" (Taylor, 1985), "Hamann-Herder understanding" (Taylor, 2009: 755-756), the "HHH conception" or "triple-H theory" after Hamann, Herder and Humboldt (Taylor, 1985: 256), which helped to cement the centrality of this group of thinkers with shared views about the importance of language in philosophy.[10] Fred Rush claims that the "teacher-student line of Isaiah Berlin-Charles Taylor-Frederick Beiser" helped to further this interpretation (Rush, 2011). More recently, the importance of Hamann and Herder's turn to language has been promoted by contemporary Anglophone philosophers and historians of philosophy such as Frederick Beiser, Andrew Bowie, Michael Forster and Ian Hacking (see, e.g. Beiser, 1993, 2006; Bowie, 1996, 2003, 2010a, 2013a, 2013b; Forster, 2010, 2011a; Hacking, 2002).

While Hamann and Herder are indeed of seminal importance for the linguistic turn in the eighteenth century and its mediation into the nineteenth century and beyond, more recent scholarship has sought to recontextualise their views within a broader turn to language that commences before their key works on this topic. Hence, before going on to examine Hamann and Herder's views about language, I shall start this chapter by situating their work within eighteenth century debates about language in philosophy amongst their predecessors and contemporaries. In surveying the background to their work I am indebted to Avi Lifschitz's recent *Language and Enlightenment* monograph, which gives an invaluable account of the genesis of debates on this topic amongst a group of thinkers around the Berlin Academy. With a few notable exceptions (e.g.

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[10] This thesis draws on my previous research on Hamann and Herder (e.g. Gray, 2012), and I have chosen to give a more detailed account of the development and legacy of their ideas on language at the expense of including a broader range of thinkers. Wilhelm von Humboldt is a notable omission from the "HHH" tradition. For an account of his contributions to the philosophy of language, see, for example, Forster, 2011a.

Cloeren, 1988), the roots of the so-called "HHH" tradition have remained relatively under-examined in Anglophone history of philosophy.

Lifschitz contrasts the linguistic turn in the eighteenth century with what he calls the "traditional view" advanced by thinkers from Aristotle to Descartes, in which language "encodes" pre-existing "ready-made thoughts" or "communicates ideas we have formed in the mind independently of [language]" (Lifschitz, 2012: 1-2). Many thinkers in the eighteenth century rejected this conception in favour one in which language "plays a major *constitutive* role in human cognition" (2). He presents language as a critically important lens through which philosophers and others were attempting to make sense of the development of human life, consciousness and society. He identifies two major genres of inquiry around language in the mid-eighteenth century. Firstly, there were various *synchronic* attempts to make sense of the interdependencies between language, thought and the mind – including through comparative analysis of different languages and cultural outlooks. Secondly, there were attempts to investigate language *diachronically*, looking at the history of the development of language as a proxy for understanding the development of the human mind, culture, social relations and political formations. This included what Scottish Enlightenment philosopher Dugald Stewart characterised as "conjectural histories" (Lifschitz: 3) or what we might now call "speculative genealogies" that informed contemporary philosophical and theoretical accounts of language (Nietzsche's speculative historical accounts may be viewed in light of – and in contrast to – these earlier works). These two topics were respectively the subjects of two prestigious essay prize competitions at the Berlin Academy, the responses to and debates around which had a formative influence on the works of Hamann and Herder.

There has been some historiographical debate about ideas about language during this period upon which I will not dwell, but which cannot be entirely ignored in the context of my argument for the importance of an eighteenth century linguistic turn in German philosophy. In brief, this concerns to what extent it can be said that there is a distinctive linguistic turn that takes place in the eighteenth century, as opposed to the continuation of a broader series of exchanges about language amongst a transnational "Republic of Letters" that goes back decades, if not centuries earlier. For present purposes, I will argue that what makes talk of an eighteenth century German linguistic turn plausible is not the interest in language *per se* but the particular *character* of this interest and the *conceptions* of language associated with it, which we shall unpack in this chapter.

Lifschitz alludes to the works of Hans Aarsleff, contemporary historian of linguistics and philosophy, who contested claims for the originality of a turn to language in German philosophy in this period throughout his works. In his 1974 essay on "The Tradition of Condillac", Aarsleff – as Lifschitz puts it – "challenged the then-dominant view that Herder's 1771 prize essay on the origin of language was a decisive break with all preceding inquiries" (Lifschitz, 2012: 10; Aarsleff, 1982a: 146-209). Aarsleff claimed that Herder's prize-winning essay to the 1771 competition of the Berlin Academy had been "almost universally misinterpreted both in regards to its doctrines and its originality" (Aarsleff, 1982a: 147), that it was "indebted to eighteenth-century French linguistic thought and especially to Condillac" (335), and in particular that it bore significant similarities with Condillac's seminal 1746 essay on language. In a similar vein he argued that Humboldt's dependence on Herder was overstated, and both drew on common, predominantly Francophone or Francophone inspired sources (335-355). In a series of heated exchanges with Isaiah Berlin in the early 1980s, Aarsleff

attacked Berlin's claims for the originality and importance of Hamann, Herder and Vico (Aarsleff, 1981, 1982b).

Ian Hacking published several pieces in response to Aarsleff and Berlin's public spat, questioning Aarsleff's contention that whatever is good in Hamann and Herder is "mere transmission" (Hacking, 1988: 151; cf. Hacking, 1982). He suggested that Aarsleff may not have recognised the change of character in discussions about language in the eighteenth century debates around the Berlin Academy partly because of his own "true enthusiasm" for "radically private language" (Hacking, 1988: 152). According to Hacking, this left Aarsleff "unable to discern the profound changes effected by the German romantic and philological tradition" (152-153), as well according both epistemological and genealogical priority to the Lockean tradition (and in particular French adherents to this Lockean tradition such as Condillac) which retains an essentially representational and private conception of language. Hacking argues that with Hamann and Herder's work, language "becomes essentially public" thus breaking with some of the key tenets of this flawed representationalist tradition (Hacking, 1988: 152). In relation to Berlin and Aarsleff's disagreement about whether Hamann could be considered Herder's teacher (the former arguing that the historical record points towards this, the latter doubting this), Hacking suggested that with respect to the (in his view pivotal) argument about the publicness of language, "Hamann was clear and less of a backslider about this than his more widely read successors" – including Herder (152).

Hacking expounds this view on the importance of Hamann and Herder in his article "How, Why, When and Where Did Language Go Public?" (Hacking, 2002). Drawing on Isaiah Berlin's work on Herder, Hacking says that the seminally important changes in

thought about language in this period include the realisations that there can be "no thought without language", that "a language characterizes a culture", and "that language is the medium in which a human being becomes a person" (128). He dubs Berlin's tripartite conception of pluralism, populism and expressivism the "culture concept" (129). While it is true that Condillac and others made points that anticipated elements of the "culture concept", they remained committed to a representationalist and essentially private conception of language. For example, he notes that Condillac says "it appears that every language expresses the character of the people that speak it", but – Hacking counters – "it never occurred to him that a language and a people are co-constitutive" (130). While he says it would be an anachronism to read Hamann as though he were making the same claims as Wittgenstein in his later works, he nevertheless argues that there are kernels and insights which do anticipate many of Wittgenstein's main points, in particular what has become known as the "private language argument" (137). Hacking also argues, however, that one effect of Wittgenstein's work was to "depoliticize the idea of language as essentially public", and overall his work has effectively "vaccinated analytic philosophy against more radical transformations" (136). Within Hamann's work, Hacking argues we may find a conception of language as fundamentally *creative* and "profoundly nonrepresentative" (139). He says that for Hamann, language is that through which human awareness, sociality, thought and rationality are possible, and "to it we owe the existences and structures that populate our world-versions" (139).

Following Hacking, I shall hence argue that what matters about the debates about language in eighteenth century is not the preoccupation with language *per se*, nor views about its central role in philosophy, nor the novelty of these claims, but rather the

convergence of a particular constellation of conceptions about language that will become central in German philosophy for the next two and a half centuries. This constellation does not represent a set of shared common denominators, but rather consists of an overlapping network of insights, arguments and concerns that might be better characterised in terms of "family resemblances" (to use Wittgenstein's phrase). While I follow Berlin, Taylor, Hacking and others in considering Hamann and Herder to be paradigmatic, in the present context I am less directly concerned with arguing for their priority, nor with the intellectual history of how the different elements of the constellation came together. Aarsleff is of course right to challenge any notion that there might be a self-contained and wholly original German tradition of the philosophy of language, and right to call for further historical scholarship about the complex trans-national and trans-cultural interdependencies of scholarship during this period. For present purposes I will limit myself to several key texts and thinkers in order to delineate this constellation, while also recognising that its edges are porous and it heavily draws on and contributes to philosophy in other languages and places. As we shall see in the coming pages, this constellation includes claims for languages' public and social rather than private and individual characters, their expressive and constitutive functions as opposed to representational functions, and cognisance of their historical and material affordances as public communicative infrastructures.

With these qualifications in mind, I will return to Lifschitz's account of philosophical debates about language around the Berlin Academy in the eighteenth century, to which Hamann and Herder's reflections of language were indebted. Lifschitz describes how around this time there was a widespread sentiment that "material and intellectual culture could be properly observed only in linguistic, symbolic and historical terms" (Lifschitz,

2012: 64). He argued that Leibniz, Wolff and Condillac all believed that signs had a "constitutive role in cognitive processes", and that they all viewed language as a "tool enabling human beings to reverse their initial immersion in sense data" (47). The rediscovery of naturalistic accounts of language from Epicurus and Lucretius, prompted debates about reconciling natural history and human artifice on the one hand, and natural and Biblical accounts of the origins of language on the other. As noted above, naturalistic accounts of language were part of a broader enterprise (associated with what would later be characterised as the Enlightenment) to chart the development of human consciousness, society, institutions, culture and values. Language was seen as something that developed in tandem to these other elements of human societies – to meet different sets of needs and interests. Lifschitz claims that the rising popularity of these kinds of naturalistic and historical accounts led many thinkers away from an interest in the creation of universal languages, because a language that was fixed and universal – rather than malleable, responsive and context sensitive – might actually represent a hindrance rather than an advantage (37). Likewise, Aarsleff argued that universal language schemes remained marginal during this period, against some historical accounts from the nineteenth century which overstated their prevalence and importance around this time (Aarsleff, 1982).

What kinds of views about language were "in the air" around the Berlin Academy running up to the time of the first prize competition on language in 1759? There were debates about symbolic cognition drawing on the works of Descartes, Leibniz and Wolff. As alluded to above, there were debates about rationalism and pietism in theology as well as in philosophy which contributed a religious subtext to discussions about making sense of language and meaning. Controversial attempts to rationalise

and/or systematise biblical teachings (such as the Wertheim Bible) and subsequent backlashes led to an increased hostility towards the unabated formalist aspirations of Wolffian school philosophy in some quarters (Lifschitz, 2012: 50). This mistrust towards formalisation and calculation corresponded with a rising interest in other forms of meaning, expression and sense-making. According to Lifschitz, by the mid-1750s, the idea that a society was reflected in its language and vice versa was widespread (not least due to the influence of the works of Condillac and Diderot), as were attempts to combine naturalistic and Epicurean approaches to understanding language with "the modern thesis of the close interdependence between signs and thinking" (84). He argues that Condillac, Diderot and Rousseau "all regarded ancient languages as closer to the primordial, expressive language of action" (92), a view which Hamann and Herder both share, as we shall see shortly.

Condillac's 1746 *Essay on the Origin of Human Knowledge* and La Mettrie's highly controversial 1747 *Machine-Man* both contributed to bringing language to the forefront of intellectual debates in the mid-eighteenth century (Condillac, 2001; La Mettrie, 1996). Pierre Louis Maupertius, the President of the Berlin Academy took a keen interest in these issues, and himself penned an essay on the origins of language in 1752. The 1759 question was proposed by another member of the Berlin Academy, Pierre Le Guay de Prémontval, who wished to use the competition as a means to undermine Wolffian philosophy. The question was posed as follows:

> The Class of Speculative Philosophy proposes for the ordinary Prize of 1759 the following question: *What is the reciprocal influence of the Opinions of a People on the language, and of the Language on the Opinions?* This should be demonstrated by a number of selected examples:

1. How many strange turns of phrase and expressions there are in Languages, born manifestly from certain opinions received among the peoples where these Languages were formed: this first point will be the easiest.

2. It will be essential to show, in certain turns of phrase typical of each language, in certain expressions, and even in the roots of certain words, the seeds of this or that Error or the obstacles to the reception of this or that Truth.

This double point of view should give rise to very important reflections. After explaining *how a turn of mind forms a Language, which then imparts to the mind an outlook more or less favourable to true ideas*, one could search for the most practical means of remedying the inconveniences of Language. (93)

The winning essay, Johann David Michaelis's *A Dissertation on the Influence of Opinions on Language and of Language on Opinions*, presented a picture whereby "language is a democracy where use or custom is decided by the majority" (Michaelis, 1771: 2). The essay helped to strengthen a view of language as having a fundamental dependence on its relationship to a linguistic community who shape and reshape its meanings through linguistic practices, such that all members have the chance to "become contributors to that immense heap of truth and errors, of which the languages of nations are the repositories" (3). As we will see in the works of Hamann and Herder (and in the later works of Wittgenstein, as we saw in the last chapter), Michaelis opposed what he characterised as the over-zealous and tyrannical prescriptive manoeuvres by scholars and linguistic reformers to rationalise, formalise and purify natural language, whether through "grammatical pedantry", to reduce it to a formal system or to attempt to remove ambiguities and synonyms in the service of obtaining a purified language "as void of graces or ornaments as the signs of algebra" (76-77, 90). He argued that the democratic nature of language could act as a preventative to such measures, such that a linguistic community could *de facto* veto attempts to impose

unwanted changes by refusing to change their linguistic patterns and habits to accommodate proposed changes (89).

Against the philosophical drive to eradicate synonyms that were considered "superfluous", Michaelis advocated a "copiousness of terms" and a "fecundity of etymologies and expressions" (33). As we shall see Hamann, Herder and others arguing later, Michaelis contended that a language could be enriched by means of translations, and that examining the quality of translations was "the surest method for determining the richness" of a language – acting as a proxy for things like the repertoire, range, nuance, musicality and expressive capacity of a given language (36). His experience as a philologist of biblical and oriental languages no doubt contributed to his appreciation of these aspects of a language, as contrasted with the formal-logical or designative aspects which were the favoured objects of study of other philosophers.

Michaelis contended that the science of scholars who wrought their intellectual innovations into "the language of common life" would always have greater traction and more successful longer term adoption "than when delivered in a technical language" (91). This focus on making philosophical language accessible would also have resonated with the *Popularphilosophen* or "popular philosophers", who lamented the state of academic philosophy and called for a "philosophy for the world", a cause with which Herder also identified in many of his works (Beiser, 1993: 165-169; Zammito, 2002: 15-42, 2006; Giovanni, 2011; Lifschitz, 2012: 61-63). Michaelis's essay would have struck a political chord with members of the Academy who were interested in the relationship between languages, cultures, peoples and nations. This included the so-called "genius" of language, which by the seventeenth century included discussion of

how the qualities of a vernacular reflected various characteristics of its speakers (cf. Schlaps, 2004; Pountain, 2008; Lifschitz, 2012: 65-94). While the debates about language amongst members and followers of the Berlin Academy nominally had a more hypothetical or intellectual character, they had many different social, cultural and political implications which were not lost on the academy's members – from questions around the languages of scholarship (whether French, Latin or German), the pre-eminent influence of French culture and ideas in Prussia (which Frederick the Great was so enamoured with), to shifting geopolitical relations (including around the Seven Years' War from 1754 to 1763). Over the following decades, these discussions acquired an even sharper political dimension as they informed various projects to provide social and cultural foundations for German nation-building aspirations.

The vision and concerns embodied in Michaelis's 1759 essay helped to establish the frame for debates about language in German intellectual circles for years to come. Whilst it drew on many other thinkers and traditions – including the French language Lockean tradition – it painted an influential picture of language as a living social, historical, cultural and political phenomenon that should be studied and understood in relation to specific linguistic communities. This picture of language was explicitly formulated in opposition to philosophical views of language that focused on cognitive representation and language as an imperfect system that stood in need of formalisation and purification. In Michaelis's view language cannot be understood apart from in relation to its deployment, namely its users and the uses to which it is put. The contingency and contexts of the development of a given language were seen as critically important determining factors and assets in relation to a language's expressive capacity, rather than as circumstantial details to be redacted and boiled away through

philosophical analysis. The power and wealth of a language resided precisely in its ability to bring together the experiences of a linguistic community. As such languages bore the traces of past societies and civilisations in a way which was directly analogous to their objects or buildings, documents or archaeological traces – a position which Michaelis's philological work would no doubt have warmed him towards. Arguably the essay contributed towards language "going public", as Hacking put it, being conceived as a social and intersubjective medium, rather than a tool for representing the pre-formed ideas or independent sensory perceptions of individual language users. This conception of the "democratic" character of language remains influential amongst many contemporary linguistic researchers. For example, the linguist and popular science writer Steven Pinker portrays language as a collective enterprise which is more like "a wiki that pools the contributions of millions of writers and speakers" than "a protocol legislated by an authority" (Pinker, 2014). While Pinker's often aggressively reductionistic account of language is not without its problems (see, e.g. Bowie, 2007), it is interesting to note that this democratic picture of language in the mid-eighteenth century is still considered to have empirical plausibility.

Hamann and Herder's views about language were both deeply informed by and developed in relation to the 1759 essay competition in general and Michaelis's essay in particular. For the rest of this chapter I shall unpack their respective views about language, and how these conceptions might contribute to enriching contemporary philosophical debates about language. Before I do this I'll mention a brief caveat with respect to their role in the eighteenth century linguistic turn in German language philosophy. Michael Forster has recently argued that Herder's views "not only chronologically prior … but are also markedly superior" to Hamann's and

interpretations which see Hamann as the "original genius" and Herder as a "mere epigone" do a "historical injustice" to Herder (Forster, 2010: 310, 314). However, I would contend that Forster's appraisal of Hamann's works is overly unsympathetic and downplays several contributions which will become fundamentally important in a constellation of views about language that we will look at in the next chapter. I think it is likely that both figures may have drawn more heavily on discussions around the Berlin Academy than has previously been recognised. I agree with Forster's appraisal that it is unfair to see Herder as wholly derivative from Hamann, but disagree with the claim that nearly all of the most interesting insights and conceptual moves from this period should be attributed to Herder. Instead I'd like to propose a reading whereby Hamann and Herder are considered two particularly noteworthy thinkers in a broader turn to language in the eighteenth century, who drew on common sources and inspired each other in a number of important ways (as we shall explore below).

Hamann on Language, Creation and Revelation

In Hamann's work there are three main clusters of his work on language that I will focus on: firstly, around the time of the first essay competition of the Berlin Academy in 1759-1762; secondly, around the competition around 1772-1773; and finally a period around 1784-1786. I shall mainly focus on his published works (as opposed to his extensive correspondence), in particular a recent edition of his philosophical works translated and edited by Kenneth Haynes (Hamann, 2007). For the purposes of my thesis, two of the most significant contributions are his 1762 *Aesthetica in Nuce* on aesthetics, language and experience, and his 1784 *Metacritique on the Purism of*

Reason, a response to Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* which is his most important work for the philosophical issues under discussion in this thesis.

In 1760 Hamann published *Essay on an Academic Question*, his own response to the Berlin Academy's competition in which he affirmed many elements of the picture of language in Michaelis's winning essay, at the same time as challenging the latter's approach and the framing of the competition's question, which he accused of lacking clarity, and being "dry", "indeterminate" and "ambiguous" (Hamann, 2007: 9-19). He shares a fundamentally social, historical and cultural vision of language as a living institution, arguing that:

> The lineaments of a people's language will therefore correspond with the orientation of its mode of thinking, which is revealed through the nature, form, laws and customs of its speech as well as through its external culture and through a spectacle of public actions. (13)

Hamann criticises Michaelis for adopting "many prejudices of philosophical myopia" (14). He considers the latter's approach too narrowly rationalistic, scholarly and historicist in the sense that his works focus on turning language into an object, and risks prioritising the residual signs of language over the living spirit which animates it as an institution. In this regard he contrasts the overall "resemblance of a painting" with "the regularity of the design or of the blend of colours or the light and shadow". He thus intimates that we should not lose sight of seeing language as a living whole by becoming distracted by the study of the patterns, structures and functioning of its parts. In other words, we should not lose sight of the wood for the trees. Hamann will unpack this accusation at greater length in his *Aesthetica in Nuce*. The holism that this metaphor

is intended to communicate (in relation to both language and the world) will become a central tenet throughout Hamann's life's work.

The imperative of a more holistic perspective and greater awareness of context is reiterated with a juxtaposition of two excerpts from Hesiod. The first quote is about showing "the measures of the resounding sea, being altogether unskilled in seafaring and ships". The second quote is about "[telling] the thought aegis-bearing Zeus", having been taught by the Muses to "sing unlimited song". This echoes and augments the appeal above: that should not let the specialised, technical study of language (skill in "seafaring and ships") eclipse a picture of it as a living institution (witnessing the vast "resounding sea"). Nor do we need knowledge of the former in order to obtain a perspective on the latter. Both quotes also can be quite plausibly read with a theological lens, gesturing to a broader divine context around historical and natural accounts of language. Such a theological reading need not concern us in the present context *per se*, but it is worth noting what will later become an archetypical Hamannian move: the insistence on gesturing outwards towards a broader frame of reference, towards different ways of knowing and experiencing, and towards a recognition of the limitations of human cognitive and intellectual capacities (which are all consonant with the kind of Pietist outlook that was discussed in chapters two and three).

Hamann's 1760 essay gives an account of language which portrays it as a creative, holistic, partial and living institution. His account focuses on language's role in mediating human experience of creation – in relation to which we must understand tradition and translation. He suggests that anyone who wishes to answer the Berlin Academy's question must study the dialectical tension between the "craving for

translation" on the one hand and for "logical demonstration" on the other (15). These two elements have "kept each other going". An unmoderated drive for translation would lead to a "rosary of enumerated neologisms" (i.e. a mass of unintegrated vocabulary) and an unchecked impulse for logic would lead to a "net that captures and takes good and foul fish of every class" (i.e. structures which agnostic to that which they organise). He argued that translation "can very reasonably be considered the most ancient", and logical demonstration "as the most recent"; the former "the immovable mode of thinking of a people", the latter "movable". Thus Hamann polemically reverses the epistemological hierarchy of Wolffian philosophy, which prioritises logical demonstration (and patterns of necessity and deductive inference thereof) over the contingent terms which fill the placeholders that it articulates. He makes the case that any viable account of language must take account of both of them.

While he opposes the epistemological prioritisation of abstract logical structures, as we shall see throughout his works, it is worth noting at the outset of this exposition that there is a clear recognition and appreciation in Hamann's works of the value and indispensability of the logic and rationality inherent within language. This arguably runs against the "Counter-Enlightenment" and "irrationalist" interpretations of his work – as can be found in some nineteenth century histories of philosophy and as popularised by Isaiah Berlin – that portray Hamann as being critical of or opposed to reason *per se* (cf. O'Flaherty, 1988; Haynes, 2012). As alluded to above, a much more plausible reading is that he opposed the *totalising purification* of reason, and the subordination of the manifold ways of experiencing, knowing, expressing and acting with language to the disproportionately formal and narrowly analytical moulds that were often privileged by philosophers.

The picture of language as a living medium of human consciousness and society is reinforced by Hamann's suggestion of two metaphors for its inter-subjective, inter-generational and historical character. Firstly, he alludes to a short fable by Christian Fürchtegott Gellert called "The Story of the Hat" (Gellert, 1769: 9-10). In this story a hat is passed down from generation to generation, with each of its owners adjusting, modernising and reinventing it to suit their functions, fashions and purposes. Each owner has their own, often grandiose, aspirations about their reinvention of the hat, only to perish and pass on the hat for its next round of reinvention. In the final line Gellert suggests that that hat is "like philosophy". This message of the changing fashions and the hubris of philosophy is surely directed towards Michaelis and his philosophically minded colleagues at the Berlin Academy.

In a second metaphor alluding to Plato's *Symposium*, Hamann compares language to the human body which is "constantly transformed" every few years, yet "remains the same" (Hamann, 2007: 15-16). In a footnote he quotes the *Symposium*, saying that "since each living thing is called living, he is continually becoming a new person", "not only in his body but in his soul: manners, habits, opinions, desires, pleasures, pains or fears" (16). Through these metaphors Hamann portrays language as a living fabric that is constantly being rewoven to meet the needs and circumstances of its users. As a model to study this, he suggests that there has already been substantial research undertaken to investigate the "relation of language to its variable usage" - including Montesquieu's 1748 *The Spirit of the Laws*, which included comparative study of different legal systems in relation to their various social, cultural, environmental, geographical, political, economic, religious and historical contexts. Many have argued that Montesquieu's approach in this and other texts is an important precursor to the later

creation of the fields of sociology and anthropology (see, e.g. Durkheim, 1965; Wolff & Cipolloni, 2007: 4).

The relationship between language and experience is a recurring theme in this essay, as well as in many other of Hamann's works. He gestures towards the interdependence between language and experience in his discussion of the "agreement" between "sensory impressions" and "coil springs of human speech" (Hamann, 2007: 14), as well as in relation to the "hermeneutical principles" of "an ear that keeps good time and a throat rich in tones" in prelinguistic forms of communication (15). He also emphasises the importance of the study of translation processes, suggesting that "whoever writes in a foreign language must like a lover accommodate his mode of thinking to it" and "every language demands a mode of thinking and a taste that are proper to it" (18).

Many of the themes from Hamann's reaction to Berlin Academy's essay competition on language and opinions are echoed in another piece from 1760 called *Miscellaneous Notes on Word Order in the French Language*. The piece contains three suggestions about language which can be read as proto-Wittgensteinian – as Hacking also argues (Hacking, 2002).

Firstly, that on the critical importance of the usage and exchange of words in determining their value and meaning, a point which he makes by means of a comparison between language and money. He talks of the "public treasury of language" (Hamann, 2007: 32) and says "money and language stand in a closer relationship than one might expect" (22). The comparison between money and language is made by many before Hamann (see, e.g. Gray, 1996), but it seems he is using it to make a very contemporary

point – that monetary transactions can be structurally compared to linguistic transactions. He writes "the wealth of all human knowledge rests on the exchange of words" (Hamann, 2007: 22). Both economic and linguistic exchanges take place against the background of other past exchanges. Every transaction becomes part of the history of transactions which affect future exchanges. The value or "wealth" of language depends on a living and evolving mass of exchanges. In a similar vein, Gilbert Ryle later wrote "Roughly, as Capital stands to Trade, so Language stands to Speech" (Ryle, 2009: 420).

Secondly, Hamann argues that philosophical attempts to formalise and purify language risk impoverishing it (which also echoes Michaelis's claims about the importance of synonyms and arguments against rationalisation of "redundant" terms). Thus, he writes, that the "purity of a language dispossesses it of its wealth" and "a correctness that is all too rigid takes away its strength" (Hamann, 2007: 31) – a point which anticipates Wittgenstein's claim that the philosophical demand for purity is in conflict with the need for "friction" – the impurities, ambiguities and roughness that enable language to function (Wittgenstein, 2001: I §107).

Thirdly and finally, he suggests that many philosophical misunderstandings issue from lack of awareness about the use of language. Thus he writes that "ignorance of scholars in the depths of language lends a hand to abuses without end" (Hamann, 2007: 23). Scholarly reconstructions try to retrospectively rationalise the linguistic leftovers of social and cultural forms of life which they neglect to study. In a footnote he includes a quote from Fontenelle, which says that: "languages were not established by academic

reasonings and discussions but a combination, bizarre in appearance, of an infinite number of complicated accidents" (24).

Hamann's 1762 *Cloverleaf of Hellenistic Letters* may be read as a companion piece to *Aesthetica in Nuce*, which was composed in the same year. Both texts are about debates about language in the New Testament. Both essays evoke a contrast between visions of language as vibrant living tradition mediating between creatures and creation, and the rationalistic study of the linguistic bones of philosophers and philologists (and Michaelis in particular). In this vein, Hamann writes in the *Cloverleaf of Hellenistic Letters*, "no language can be surveyed from books alone" and "the language of an author is as a dead language compared to the language of social life" (37). Echoing his claim for the importance of usage in his *Miscellaneous Notes on Word Order in the French Language*, he writes that "since words and usages are signs, their history and philosophy is very similar and mutually dependent" (40), elucidating that "the purpose, place, time of an author all qualify his expression" and that "court, school, the business of everyday life, closed guilds, gangs, and sects have their own dictionaries" (41). He grounds the use of language in the social reality of living, experiencing human beings, contending that "every imperceptible gradation of feeling colours the expression of our concepts" (37). In adopting this approach, part of his aim is to recover a sense of how the biblical text and biblical language is but a faint shadow of the bright, living reality of circumstances, colours and characters depicted in the books – a shadow of what some theologians will later call the *Sitz im Leben*, or "setting in life" of the text.

Hamann reiterates this distinction – between the "dead bones" analysed by scholars and the daylight of living creation – in his discussion of relationship between

philosophy, as a faculty for abstract analysis; and poetry, as a faculty for experiential

synthesis (46). In order to understand language, we need to look beyond grammar,

beyond the arrangements of words on the page, towards its living deployment amongst

speakers. Thus he writes, "the voice of the people is the voice of God" and quotes the

British theologian John Lightfoot's suggestion that "the dialect of God is

ungrammatical" (39). Against Michaelis's philological analysis of biblical texts,

whereby he strove to correct mistakes and to extract the essential meanings or teachings

from the contingent circumstances surrounding the text, Hamann writes "I care more

about the genius than the grammar of the Greek language" (43). In a similar move to his

Socratic Memorabilia's attempt to recast Socrates as a pious proto-Christian figure

(against his appropriation as a hero of the Enlightenment), he describes Aristotle as "an

exemplary draftsman" and Plato as "a colourist", in order to highlight their expressive

use of language, rather than its purely formal, rational character (45). While Michaelis

looks to "gather and reconcile the scattered limbs of the people" (58) in the field of

history, which is like "that open valley that was full of bones", Hamann facetiously

states that he would prefer to turn to anatomy as a means to "know thyself" rather than

to "seek the art of living and ruling in our historic skeletons" (46). This is consistent

with his ongoing appeal for holism about the human person as an embodied, mortal,

sensuous, living, loving creature as opposed to the ahistorical, disembodied, cerebral

subject of overly rationalistic philosophers.

Many of these themes continue to be central in Hamann's *Aesthetica in Nuce*, where

he unpacks them at greater length and articulates his case in a way that makes its

relevance beyond his theological dispute with Michaelis clearer and more explicit (even

if this is not what Hamann intended). The organising metaphor of living constellations

of language in society against dead systems and empty tenets of rationalistic scholarship remains central in the text, as he urges that "we must become even as little children if we are to receive the spirit of truth" (72) against the "original mathematical sin" of Michaelis and his colleagues. Addressing Michaelis, Hamann quotes Bacon's statement that "as to seek theology in philosophy is to seek the living among the dead, so to seek philosophy in theology is to seek the dead among the living" (71-72). At the opening of the piece he refers to Michaelis as "the Archangel over the relics of Canaan's language" (62). The main point of contention in the piece is how to read biblical language. While Hamann argues that Michaelis opts for overly literal and rational reconstructions, Hamann emphasises the many other functions of language, especially its aesthetic, poetic and expressive functions.

While – as noted above – Hamann acknowledges the role of "philosophical or characteristic" language, alongside language which is "poetic or curiological", "historical or symbolic or hieroglyphic", he opposes attempts to maximise the former to the exclusion of the latter. Contra Berlin, I would argue that the opposition of a maximalist position regarding a particular "thin" conception of rationality (as opposed to a "thicker" and more holistic conception of rationality, as mediated by language) should not invite the label "irrationalist". Hamann recognises the role of narrow, formalised practices of reason – but takes issue with philosophical claims that these should be considered the sole or dominant model for human reason and understanding. Thus he writes of how "the large and small Masorah of philosophy" – the Masorah being the marginal annotations on religious texts – "has overwhelmed the text of nature, like the Great Flood" (80). He ridicules the marginality and niche appeal of philological

and philosophical modes of inquiry, saying that their "world of readers" is like a "lecture-hall which a single Plato filled" (82).

Against the literal and rationalistic theological readings of Michaelis and his contemporaries which focus on extracting essential meanings from contingent circumstance and redundant decorative expression, Hamann inverts their case and argues for the centrality of figurative language. Thus he writes:

> Poetry is the mother tongue of the human race, as the garden is older than the ploughed field; painting, than writing; song, than declamation; parables, than logical deduction; barter, than commerce. (63)

In the vision of language that Hamann presents in *Aesthetic in Nuce*, images are central to the creation of meaning. He writes that "the senses and passions speak and understand nothing but images" and that "all the wealth of human knowledge and happiness consists in images" (63). Images are the locus between language and experience. But for Hamann experience is not envisaged as the sensory input that grounds an individual's knowledge of an object in the "external world" (as for empiricist philosophers), but rather a collective medium for bearing witness to creation which is given form through the word. Hamann's *Aesthetica* draws heavily on imagery from opening passages of the Gospel of John, including the notions that "in the beginning was the Word", that "the Word was God", that "through him all things were made", that "in him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind" and that bearing "witness to the light" (as per the Gospel of John) is a model expression of faith for Christian believers. According to this Johannine creation story, the coming-into-being of language is coterminous with the coming-into-being of human consciousness of

creation. In this conception, language is very literally "world-disclosing" – a term associated with Heidegger's thought which many have also used in relation to the HHH tradition, Gadamer, Habermas and others (see, e.g. Kompridis, 1994, 2011; Lafont, 1999, 2000). While Hamann believes that languages play a significant role in structuring our experience, he also suggests that they do not exhaust our experience of the world.

Hamann quotes the ancient saying "Speak that I may see you!", and argues that to speak is to translate from "an angelic language into a human language". He suggests that creation is "speech to creature through creatures", but that all that "all we have left in nature for our use are jumbled verses and *disjecti membra poetae*", the latter being a phrase from Horace referring to the "limbs of a dismembered poet" (65-66). This metaphor is central to Hamann's view of language, as well as to his own authorship. It conveys a sense of language as a living *bricolage* of fragments or exemplary phrases, sayings, expressions, quotations and allusions that are continually re-adapted and given fresh life in new contexts and circumstances. He presents a division of labour in which poets and creative users of language play a leading role in recalibrating and reorganising our semantic apparatus:

> To gather these together is the scholar's modest part; to interpret them, the philosopher's; to
> imitate them – or bolder still – bring them into the right order, the poet's. (65)

This epistemological reversal places poet (denigrated by philosophers of pure reason) at the apex of human knowledge, whilst formal philosophical systems are relegated. If philosophers argued for universal reason, Hamann advanced an aesthetic conception predicated upon universal *passion*, suggesting that "you can observe for yourselves the

phenomena of passion everywhere in human society" (81). It was "passion alone", he contended" that "gives hands, feet, and wings to abstractions as well as to hypotheses" as well as giving "spirit, life, and tongue" to "images and signs" (81).

Hamann esteems language for its creative, revelatory and expressive capacities: for its power to help people to collectively apprehend and negotiate their way through the world, rather than for its capacities for logical demonstration or philosophical argumentation. Following Cervantes, he compares translation to looking at "the wrong side of a tapestry" (66). Through this comparison he may be read as pointing towards the *imperfection* of human language in mediating the experience of creation, as well as drawing attention to its capacity to render worlds as a *whole* (similar to his metaphor of a painting in his *Essay on an Academic Question*). He suggests that poetic language can help to bring about awareness of creation, whereas philosophical language may sometimes only serve to mask it through abstraction and the fabrication of elaborate distractions. Hamann suggest that this philosophical tendency may verge on blasphemy. This disdain is in no small part theological. He suggests that ordinary experience is a manifestation of the individual's relationship with God, a sentiment which resonates with later notions such as Kierkegaard's "existence-communication", or Rudolph Bultmann's existential conception of *"realised eschatology"*. Drawing on the Gospel of John, Hamann writes: "if one single truth like the sun prevails, it is day" (78). A philosophical preoccupation with the "unnatural use of abstractions" may distract us from language's relationship with the aesthetic dimensions of experience, and from our relation to creation, such that "every reaction of man unto created things is an epistle and seal that we partake of the divine nature, and that we are his offspring" (79).

He contends that poetic language can bring us into a closer relationship with creation. In a line which could come straight from romantic writers (such as Novalis), Hamann writes that: "Nature and Scripture, then, are the materials of the beautiful, creative, and imitative spirit" (85). In this context nature stands for the witnessing of the "light" of creation and is essentially revelatory, as opposed to the staid and studied naturalisms of the Enlightenment. For Hamann, "scripture" is understood more broadly to refer to the mediation of this revelation of nature in tradition – including many kinds of literary texts and forms of cultural expression. In this sense, he anticipates later moves to take biblical hermeneutics as the basis for a universal hermeneutics.

Herder on Language, Consciousness and Culture

Herder's "Fragments on Recent German Literature" of 1767/68 is one of his earliest works on language. As well as discussing debates about language around the Berlin Academy and Hamann's ideas about language, experience and the primacy of poetic expression, Herder theoretically recasts many of these concerns, and sets forth his own distinctive agenda around translation, literature, culture, history and the relationship between reason, language and experience.

The essay opens with the notion that "the exactitude of a language diminishes its richness", echoing Michaelis and Hamann's thoughts that the philosophical drive for abstraction, parsimony and boiling away contingency can have an impoverishing effect on the expressive repertoire of a language (Herder, 2002: 31). While philosophers find near synonymous words "annoying", and feel the need to "determine them precisely", to "[order] into classes and [wash] away the excess", Herder contends that "almost-

synonyms" enable richer "many-sided" descriptions language and it is precisely language's superfluity which gives it expressive reach and power (34-36, 64). Following Hamann's *Aesthetica in Nuce*, Herder argues for the primacy of poetry over philosophy. "The oldest languages", Herder contends, "have a sort of sensuous formation" (60). Echoing several Hamannian metaphors, Herder says that older languages are a kind of "living expression", which "bear witness" to the circumstances of its users (61). For the ancients "speaking and singing … were one thing", and the earliest languages consisted of "singing and speaking nature" with "flying fragments" (62). Herder considered the oldest languages to be a kind of "living noise" (63) – "rushing with the whirlwind", "resounding in the battle", "raging with the sea", "roaring with the river", "cracking with the collapsing rock", "speaking with the animals" (61). As with Hamann, Herder thus portrayed early languages as existential *sound* rather than as proto-rationalistic *system*. He suggests that in addition to the emergence of new terms and synonyms to reflect new objects, conditions and practices, another important way to increase the potency of a language is through literary translation. In this sense, a literary translator is like "a merchant who really enriches the state" (37).

Following Michaelis, Hamann and debates around the Berlin Academy, Herder sees language as being intimately connected with the circumstances of its users. He says that "each original language which is the native growth of a country develops in accordance with its climate and region" and that "each national language forms itself in accordance with the ethics and manner of thought of its people" (50). Much like Michaelis's emphasis on the *de facto* democratic character of language as the living aggregate of contingent transactions amongst its users, Herder writes that he regards language, and modes of understanding that it enables and articulates, as:

> [...] a composition of millions of heads, as a product of whole millennia, and as a creation to whose formation and endless confluence of accidents and trivialities, an intervention of countless missteps and situations, had to contribute! (57)

As we saw Wittgenstein taking issue with the monomania of philosophers who tried to study language as though it were essentially doing one type of thing (such as designating or declaring), Herder rejects that there is a "single idea" underpinning the "great mass and variety" of natural language (57).

He also goes beyond the notion that language reflects the circumstances of its users, to make the case that thoughts take shape "not only in" but "also in accordance with" language, and that "language sets limits and outline for the whole of human cognition" (48-49). This is a crucial statement of a position which will become definitive for both Hamann and Herder, namely that reason and experience are given form by language. Reason is *articulated* by language, rather than pre-existing as an ahistorical, immutable structure that is imperfectly represented in language (like Plato's forms). Developing this position, Herder writes: "the nurses who form our tongues are therefore our first teachers of Logic" (48). The task for the philosopher is, he says, "to be able to explain it as a *development* of *reason* and as a *production of mental forces*" (58).

Like Hamann, Herder does not thereby mean that we should be passive in our relation to our linguistic inheritance. Echoing Hamann's claim in his 1760 response to the Berlin Academy's prize essay question that "a head that thinks at its own expense will always trespass on language" (Hamann, 2007: 18), Herder says:

> Every head who thinks for himself will also speak for himself, and so his manner of expression
>
> gets formed in his own way too: he will impress on his language characteristic features of his
>
> manner of seeing and characteristic features of the weaknesses and virtues of his manner of
>
> thought, or in short, a distinctive form of his own, into which his ideas have cast themselves.
>
> (Herder, 2002: 51)

Herder also shared Hamann's view that human creative expression can be seen as a kind of homage to the original divine act of creation, such that cultural works articulate their own microcosmic worlds. Both Hamann and Herder were deeply influenced by Edward Young's views on literary originality, and the notion the original compositions developed out of a linguistic tradition like vegetables out of soil, forging new forms out of pre-existing elements. Their shared readings of Shakespeare – whom they regarded as a paragon for literary originality – confirmed and encouraged this view and provided a model for later attempts to fashion a distinctive German literary culture as the basis for a unified people and a new unified state (Gillies, 1937).

In 1772 Herder entered and won the Berlin Academy prize essay competition with his *Treatise on the Origin of Language*, responding to the questions: "Supposing men abandoned to their natural faculties, are they in a position to invent language? And by what means will they arrive at this invention?". In the winning essay, Herder rejects both what he perceives as the over-reductive naturalism of Condillac and Rousseau (who respectively "made animals into human beings" and "human beings into animals"), as well as the speculative supernaturalism of Johann Peter Süßmilch (whose account he compares to the idea of a tree bursting forth fully formed from the ground, as opposed to having grown from seed). Central to his alternative account is the concept of *Besonnenheit*, or reflection, which is what enables us to pick out "a single wave" from

the "ocean of sensations" which floods us (87). The first moment of the recognition of a *Merkmal* or "characteristic mark" (such as the bleating of a sheep) *as such* is identified as the beginning of language, as well as the beginning of human reflection, awareness and consciousness. Herder describes this as the moment at which "Prometheus's heavenly spark catches fire in the human soul" (97).

Herder's account of the genesis of language describes the development of a constellation of characteristic marks for phenomena which give different languages their specific composition. In this respect his account overlaps with that in his *Fragments*: the oldest language is poetic language which is derived from impressions of nature. Here Herder also shares something of the Hamannian conception of experience as revelation of creation, rather than epistemological building blocks. The way in which nature is depicted in older languages is fundamentally aesthetic, rather than scientific in character. Early languages do not arise in response to a concern for accurate representation, for correspondences between words and objects, for "picturing facts" (as per Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*). They are rather portrayed as fundamentally musical, expressive, unfolding in concert with creation, and projecting worlds that emerge from this constellation of resonances. Herder describes them as being richer in synonyms and as containing fewer abstract terms, more verbs than nouns, and more poetic-expressive terms deriving from experience of creation – such that they are like a "vocabulary of nature", "a living epic of resounding, acting nature" or "a vocabulary of the soul which is simultaneously a mythology and a wonderful epic of the actions and speaking of all beings" (121-122, 103). This is the sense in which he means that poetry is older than prose (103).

But what about words for things which don't make sounds? Things for which there is nothing sensuous for language to imitate? Here Herder suggests that we reach for a "neighbouring sound" (106-107). All of our abstract concepts arise out of more sensuous ones. "Spirit" and "soul" come from the word for "breath", for example (118, 121). Different concepts are abstracted in different regions and different cultures, with the consequence that higher order concepts may have no analogous term in other languages. Thus, he says, there are no words for "time, duration, space, essence, matter, body, virtue, justice, freedom, gratitude" in the Peruvian language (119). This means that different cultures have different fundamental metaphysical, political, social, cultural, moral and scientific concepts, which contributes to the formation of correspondingly different outlooks and "world views", a claim which anticipates what became known as the "linguistic relativity" hypothesis of later linguists, anthropologists and philosophers (such as Sapir and Whorf) – namely the idea that languages shape or determine thought. Though the relationship may not be straightforward or direct, Herder suggests that the different material conditions, the *Klima* or "climates" of different places – including the weather, food and drink, customs, clothing, culture – contribute to the formation of different constellations of concepts.

This conception of language as a mediator of different social, cultural, political, religious and metaphysical worlds gives rise to ambitious new modes of enquiry. Like Michaelis, Herder considered language as a repository for the study of the human spirit, the spirit of "a people" constituted by virtue of being members of a linguistic community. Much as in Michaelis's 1759 essay, Herder emphasises how (at least in principle) everyone can influence the languages they use, describing the latter as "a treasure room of human thoughts to which each person contributed something in his

own way" and "an epitome of the efficacy of all human souls" (156). He considers language – and the consciousness, culture and world-making that he argues comes with it – to be *the* defining feature of humanity, like the honey-comb for the bee, or the cobweb for the spider. Language is the characteristic fabric of human thought, human society and human world-making. As Hacking notes, Herder appears to oscillate on the question of whether language is essentially public, social and intersubjective, suggesting in one place that "the savage, the solitary in the forest, would necessarily have invented language for himself" (90). But for the large part Herder presents language as what we might consider to be a kind of collective material and semiotic infrastructure: a shared repository and living institution of marks and sounds, fragments and phrases, works and traditions, lenses and frames that provides the conditions of possibility for different ways of knowing, experiencing, communicating and acting in the world. As he will later write, language is the "grand assistant" of humankind, through which they have been able to build cities and transform deserts into gardens.

What implications, if any, does this picture hold for philosophy, and in particular for philosophical conceptions of rationality? For Herder language is *constitutive* of human rationality. He writes that "without language the human being has no reason, and without reason no language" (91). This entails that any philosophical project which aspires to understand and clarify rationality and the logic of human thought must place language at the centre of their inquiry. Herder contends that philosophers have tended towards reforming and refining language without first understanding it and how it operates (138). Herder urges philosophers to leave their "dead museum" and to become students of language, "which lives" (135-137). In what is surely a nod to Hamann's

tapestry metaphor from Cervantes, Herder warns that unless they do they will "only ever see the weave of the back of the carpet" (105).

What might this look like in practice? In the closing passages of his *Treatise* Herder remarks that he has effectively "supplied no thesis" in response to the question, and that instead he advocates working towards "collecting firm data from the human soul, human organization, the structure of all ancient and savage languages, and the whole household-economy of the human species" (164). As language defines the nature, constitution and limits of human worlds, philosophers should strive to understand language *as it is actually used* and *as it has been used* in a wide variety of contexts. This includes through genealogical inquiry and etymological mappings of the contingent development of concepts, comparative study of different languages, and the study of how language is used by different people in different settings. Like Hamann, Herder retains a profound holism about human beings, their capacities and their worlds. "Language was born with the whole unfolding of the human forces", he argues (138). Likewise, reason is "no compartmentalized, separately effective force" but rather "an orientation of all forces that is distinctive to his species", "the whole domestic economy of his sensuous and cognizing, of his cognizing and willing, nature" (83-85). In order to "make visible … that web called human nature", we must study the web of language. In turn, if we want to understand language we must study its evolving material articulations, its practises, contexts, usages, institutions, how it is given form in sound, how it is breathed in music, its inscription in manifold forms of what Taylor calls "meaningful media".

But philosophical sensitivity to linguistic nuance need not be constrained to *describing* language, but also might play a role in contributing to it as a form of linguistic praxis. Herder's linguistic critique of philosophy and proposed philosophy of language must be understood against the background of his broader philosophical programme which was, broadly speaking, to radically overhaul philosophy to make it serve the needs and interests of ordinary people. In his 1765 essay *How Philosophy Can Become More Universal and Useful for the Benefit of the People* Herder made a very similar case to the "popular philosophers" of the mid-eighteenth century (which Zammito argues that we should see Herder as part of), arguing that philosophical reason "creates for itself labyrinths" and "ties knots in order to be able to untie them" (11). In response to this, Herder advocated that people should "push forth … into the holy places of philosophy" and "construct there state buildings, assemblies where instead of philosophical nonsense the healthy understanding counsels the state, humanity" (18). A philosophy that was more intimately engaged with the details of the linguistic institutions of the publics that it stood to serve would not be compelled to simply passively accept languages as they are, but might play a role in contributing to them – to articulate new forms of experience, new kinds of social, cultural and political action.

Like Hamann, Herder was a believer in the creative power of language, and through his own works hoped to exemplify an expressively richer, dialectical alternative to philosophies which focused on purifying language and formalising rationality. At the end of his *Fragments*, for example, he wrote that his "scattered fragments" were intended to be "anything but a philosophical language", and instead said that he pursued a "poetic language" that was "full of images and passions, idioms and pleonasms, word transformations and stubborn idiosyncrasy, which sang and gestured, painted for eye

and ear". Though his work is not explicitly philosophical in intent (cf. Haynes, 2007), this description is also very fitting for Hamann's work, which also performatively articulates an alternative to the philosophical language that he mistrusts with an arsenal of literary figures and rhetorical tropes. Over the coming decades, Hamann and Herder's works both contributed to bolstering ambitions to create new ways of knowing, new ways of being and new worlds through language – from the literary experimentation associated with *Sturm und Drang* to the philosophical writings of the Early German Romantics.

Hamann and Herder's Metacritical Philosophies of Language

In this final section of this chapter I shall examine how Hamann and Herder's views on language took shape towards the end of the eighteenth century, before going on to discuss their main contributions to the eighteenth century linguistic turn and how they contribute to an alternative tradition of the philosophy of language that is able to address some of the limitations of the analytic linguistic turn.

As we saw in the first chapter, both thinkers developed linguistic "metacritiques" of Kant's 1781 *Critique of Pure Reason*, wherein they expounded their views on the implications of reason's dependence upon and constitution in language. Hamann's 1784 *Metacritique on the Purism of Reason* brought to bear many of his views about language from the early 1760s as well as echoing Herder's stronger formulations from the late 1760s and early 1770s. It may be read as a kind of satirical immanent critique of Kant's *Critique*, demonstrating the dependency of pure reason on language in all of its richness. Herder's 1799 *Metacritique of the Critique of Pure Reason* – written eleven

years after Hamann's death in 1788 – may be read as an attempt to develop Hamann's succinct metacritical seed into a more fully fledged philosophical agenda.

Both contend that Kant's *Critique* is fundamentally mistaken in advancing an aggressive agenda of the purification of reason and understanding that abstracts and redefines certain philosophical concepts, at the same time as significantly underestimating that which gives these concepts purchase – namely language. In order to make the case for his puritanical project, Kant deploys a communicative apparatus which he inherits, upon which he depends, but which remains almost completely invisible, unrepresented and unexplored in his philosophy. In this regard, both Hamann and Herder consider Kant's project to be (somewhat ironically) profoundly uncritical and unreflective, as it fails at the first hurdle to recognise the character and formative importance of that through which it is articulated.

At the same time, both Hamann and Herder draw on and reconfigure Kant's project in the service of a linguistic metacritique, such that Kant's transcendental categories are replaced by a multiplicity of languages as historically situated, evolving and contingent institutions and practices. In this picture (to which I dedicate the remainder of this chapter), there is no such thing as a pre-given universal rationality, only *rationalities* which may (with no small degree of communicative work) be put into conversation with each other. Nor is there language *as such*, but rather *languages*, both living and dead. These languages may be philosophically investigated, and the way in which they project worlds can indeed be studied in order to understand how they articulate various conceptions that give structure to our worlds – including but not necessarily limited to the two intuitions and twelve categories which Kant discusses (including space, time,

quantity, quality, causality and suchlike). However, undertaking such an exercise in one language should not be mistaken for an endeavour of mapping the universal ahistorical cognitive infrastructure of mankind, especially if the concepts under investigation are arbitrarily redefined beyond all normal recognisability. This is what Hamann satirises in his metacritique, such as when he ironically reinterprets Kant's philosophical concepts of analysis and synthesis in terms of tailors' cutting and joining of cloth.

Insofar as we can speak of a synthetic *a priori* in Hamann and Herder's respective metacritiques, this is to be found in particular languages rather than in the abstract, purportedly universal transcendental categories of Kant's inquiry. Languages both transcendentally structure, organise and give shape to our experience, as well as being subjectable to revision and re-articulation in light of the usages and experiences of those who use them – from the Shakespeares and Dantes who enrich language with troves of new metaphors and expressions, to the more modest interventions of anyone who coins a combination of words which happens to be adopted by other language users. In a more fundamental way, languages *are* the sum of interactions and usages to which they are put. The meanings of linguistic terms can be understood with reference to their institutionalisation and their recorded "footprints", whether now or in the past.

It is worth noting the striking contrast between the respective conceptions of language of these two linguistic turns on the eighteenth and twentieth centuries: between the austere, architectonic minimalism of early Wittgensteinian conceptions of a universal metalanguage, and the densely woven tapestries of Hamann and Herder's writings, abundant in synonyms, quotes and expressions montaged from fragments of tradition. This latter conception of language deriving from the eighteenth century

linguistic turn is one in which thought and experience of worlds is *mediated* and *constituted* by language as an evolving rich, historical, social, cultural and material *fabric*. As Herder writes in his *Metacritique*:

> Human speech becomes a copy of everything, a living image of our manner of thought, full of light and shadows, full of terms and articulations. And this living operation continues on. As long as our understanding understands, it *becomes*, forming concepts as it regenerates itself unceasingly. Just as the understanding has experience, so reason has for its sphere the broad domain of human thoughts through the medium of speech. (128)

But if language is malleable and can be reshaped by its users, on what basis can we build a case against the universal aspirations of Kant's *Critique*? If poets can remake languages, why can't philosophers? Might not the construction of a logical calculus or the derivation of fundamental categories of our experience be considered in a similar light to the construction of a poem: as a kind of compositional praxis? In fact, is there not a case to be made that if one is committed to a broadly liberal cosmopolitan outlook, then it might make eminent sense for a philosophical avant-garde to forge ahead with the development of a meta-linguistic communicative infrastructure to in order to facilitate trans-cultural deliberation and consensus and to compose trans-national political orders and institutions towards the laudable goal of perpetual peace? Might the rejection of Kant' transcendental meta-language constitute a *cultural, political or theological aversion* to projects of liberal universalism or proto-modernist abstraction, rather than philosophical objections about their possibility or plausibility? How might we distinguish between what Rorty characterises as squeals of political disapproval or cultural distaste (Rorty, 1987: 573-574), and more substantive philosophical disagreement based on a competing conception of language and meaning?

Herder and Hamann both recognise the importance of abstraction as a fundamental aspect of language. If they were committed to an epistemological picture that adopted a principled insistence upon "lower order" linguistic terms which remained closer to experience, a principled stand against abstraction *per se*, then I think we would have reason to challenge their philosophical views. Such a view might be held to privilege something like a representational view of language such that the epistemological value of utterances is proportional to their fidelity to, or correspondence with, experience-as-epistemological-input. But Hamann and Herder's objections can be read as being directed towards a totalising obsession with abstraction and logical form at the expense of language's other capacities (perhaps analogous to the distinction between money and the love of money). Thus Herder writes "without abstraction, neither reason nor language would exist" and that we can pursue abstraction "as far as its capacity and the expression of it can extend" (Surber, 2001: 128). He also has no principled objection to abstract, formalised and specialised technical languages, saying that "every exact science deserves its own" in order to "emphasise exactitude and order", which is something of which they should "not be ashamed" (127). Likewise, as we have seen above, Hamann considers proposes that we should understand language in terms of a dialectical movement between *both* "logical demonstration" and "translation" – and not just the former at the expense of the latter. What is objectionable is "empty forms and schemas" being taken as a kind of "master account" of language.

In other words, perhaps the question is: *what is to be gained* by making the moves that Kant makes? What work does his philosophical system enable us to *do*? What exactly is it for, and how does it measure up to the objectives which it sets out to achieve? To the extent that Kant is interested in *uncovering* a universal transcendental *a*

priori, and a single, definitive set of categories which structure experience and give form to rationality in all times and all places, Hamann and Herder think that his project cannot succeed on its own terms. That which structures our experience, organises cognition and gives form to rationality is *language* – or, more accurately, specific *languages*. While Kant claims to be uncovering ahistorical structures of universal rationality, Hamann and Herder contend that what he is *actually* doing is abstracting from particular, contingent and somewhat arbitrarily selected concepts and forms of rationality from the German language, re-articulating them in a highly formal and unusual way, and *presenting* them as universal. On their view his account doesn't account for the cultural, social and historical variance in language that could well lead to quite different conceptions about the central structuring features of reason and experience.

But – taking a charitable reading of Kant's *Critique* – might we suggest that what his account lacks in descriptive or explanatory plausibility (as it is gives a poor and unlikely account of how experience and rationality *are actually* structured for everyone in all times and places), might we nevertheless adopt a view where it could be read as a kind of trans-cultural normative programme or ideal about how rationality and experience could or should be structured? Might Kant's transcendental idealist programme be read as *aspirational* – as trading expressive wealth or communicative fidelity for the advantages of rational consensus, universality and scientific precision? To put it another way, might there be strategic advantages to a thinner conception of rationality rather than a constellation of conflicting and contradictory epistemological world-projections celebrated for their expressive and poetic wealth, but perhaps arguably less useful for developing consensus in science, politics or diplomacy? As Kuehn highlights in his

intellectual biography, Kant contended that "all natural science proper requires a pure part upon which the apodictic certainty sought by reason can be based" (Kuehn, 2001: 302), and that in relation to morality "a rational belief is on which is based on no other data than those inherent in pure reason" (307). These kinds of statements make it clear that Kant was more interested in obtaining epistemological certainty than in using a thin conception of reason to as a means to obtaining consensus within scientific or political communities, through which certainty could be *constructed* rather than *uncovered*. But could we nevertheless fruitfully read him against these intentions – as contributing to the *institutionalisation* of practices of pure reason, despite his questionable account of the derivation of immutable, context-agnostic and quasi-Platonic certainties of pure reason? Perhaps we might separate the practices of the purification of reason from Kant's unconvincing account of them, in the same way that we might accept the work of a scientist proposing formulae governing the motion of physical objects whilst at the same time rejecting their account of their own work in terms of a purely rational enterprise to uncover the eternal laws of nature?

In order to extend the analogy between philosophical projects to purify reason and the cultural practices of modernism, what if we compare Kant's *Critique* to initiatives such as Otto and Marie Neurath's Isotype Institute in the twentieth century? Otto Neurath wished to develop a universal picture language as a contribution to a process of "debabelization" against a background of "warring interests and broken connections" (Neurath, 1936: 13). He believed that while "words make division", by contrast "pictures make connection" and could be used to devise a communicative scheme that was "free from the limits of language" (18). By having "as small an amount of detail as possible" (64), the proposed picture language would be an "education in clear thought",

"by reason of its limits" (22). While there is a sense that this picture language would appeal to widespread (if not universal) aspects of human perception of graphical forms, Neurath also explicitly recognises that his picture language is dependent on (and not "in competition" with) natural languages, as well other social and cultural genres of visual representation. Ultimately Neurath's project did contribute to the development of an internationally recognised system of pictographic representation, by virtue of its *institutionalisation* as a form of cultural and communicative praxis in exhibitions, books, signs, labels, global standards bodies and by influencing the practices of graphic designers (Twyman, 1975). Neurath hence aspired for communicative universality in the form of a transnational system of pictographic symbols and to some extent achieved this through the investment of time and energy with teams of designers and researchers to develop, institutionalise and build alliances around their work.

Perhaps, along similar lines, Kant's project could be re-read as a contribution towards the *construction* rather than the *discovery* of a universal project of "pure reason? Thus the operational metaphor would switch away from one of implausibly *boiling down* to obtain common elements of pure reason in one language, and towards an initiative to *compose* a minimalist expressive repertoire that was fit for Kant's philosophical purposes. If language users are sovereign, and if languages are amenable to creative redefinition and the institutionalisation of new linguistic practices and structures, are formal rationalistic meta-languages not perfectly legitimate form of expression – like more highly regimented sub-regions of modernist architecture in linguistic cities? Might the dispute between Hamann, Herder and Kant not collapse into one of linguistic-architectural expression – between the rich organic ornamentation of

gothic dwellings and the parsimonious universalism of Kant's designs as "the first real Modernist", as Clement Greenberg called him (Pissarro, 2009)?

Setting aside the question of whether Hamann and Herder shared Kant's universal aspirations, they clearly had different conceptions not only regarding style but about communicative *means*. If Kant favoured distillation of the *a priori* as the basis of his "thin" and minimalist conception of a universal pure reason, Hamann and Herder favoured a "thicker" conception of multiple rationalities that were entangled and institutionalised in different contexts of life – which could be mediated and reconfigured through translation as well as interpersonal acts of communication and expression (exemplified by the language of poetry and literature). They saw languages as more than merely *decorative* media which could be considered superfluous to a latent universal rational structure – arguing instead that reason is *constituted* and *given being* in languages. In chapter seven I shall argue that Habermas's work in this area – drawing on both the eighteenth and twentieth century linguistic turns – can be read as an attempt to reconcile the universalist aspirations of a communicative meta-language with a "thicker" conception of communicative rationality, shifting the focus away from the derivation of a universal meta-language through *boiling down* and towards the institutionalisation of *bridging* practices between linguistic repertoires as instantiated in "communicative action".

Ultimately Hamann and Herder thought that the combination Kant's threefold purification of reason from tradition, experience and language, his fundamental underestimation of language as that which structures rationality and experience, the gulf between his ambitions for the project of pure reason and understanding and its lack of

clear applications (e.g. in social, cultural, political or moral life) meant that his project could not succeed on its own terms. Instead they suggested a different direction for Kant's critical philosophy by looking at how (i) his ground-breaking shift towards examining reason in relation to a world and (ii) his transcendental analytic of the categories which provide the conditions of possibility for understanding and experience could be developed with reference to language.

I shall briefly recap the main features of Hamann and Herder's metacritiques. First of all, both Hamann and Herder hold that thought and rationality are dependent on, shaped by and given form within languages. As Charles Taylor puts it, according to this picture, languages are "constitutive-expressive" and disclose and give shape to worlds. Languages have their life in usages, practices and institutions (in the broader Wittgensteinian sense) and arise from, fundamentally structure and are continually re-calibrated in accordance with the experiences and life circumstances of their users. Philosophers should develop an appreciation of the plurality of different applications and contexts of languages – against their zealous pursuit of abstract *a priori* meta-languages. Languages are fundamentally social, historical, and deeply interwoven with the forms of life and experience which they articulate. Languages are *partial* and it is precisely this partiality which gives them their expressive wealth as well as giving rise to the importance of translation as a means to enrich expressive repertoires through the importation of terms and expressions from other traditions and cultures. This partiality is why languages both *reveal* and *conceal* different aspects of the world, as Heidegger suggests.

Both Hamann and Herder compare the creativity of human beings in language with divine creation, and see poetic and literary language as paradigmatic for language's expressive capacity as well as for attempts to actively reshape and reforge it with new terms and structures. They both suggest that philosophers can go above and beyond the passive working out of assumptions embedded in a language, but that hitherto poets have been more successful than philosophers at reconfiguring language to create, project and organise new worlds. As Herder comments, "Homer and Sophocles, Dante, Shakespeare and Klopstock have supplied psychology and knowledge of humankind with more material than even the Aristotles and Leibnizes of all peoples and times" (Herder, 2002: 189). They are both committed to what Sonia Sikka describes as the "ultimately empirical derivation of all concepts" (Sikka, 2011: 205). They are both committed to a fundamental holism about the world – including in relation to the lives of human beings and their languages. This holism becomes an important tenet that inspires and underpins philosophies in the nineteenth century – in particular romantic conceptions of the unity of life (including of science and culture, politics and religion) and in the notion of *Bildung*, which can be translated as education, development or formation – the "taking shape" of a person.

As per Schlegel's metaphor, Hamann and Herder oppose a "thick" conception of rationality and the fabric of thought, as to a "thin" conception advanced by philosophical projects of pure reason and in the "ideal language" branch of the analytic linguistic turn. In light of thick accounts of reason, we may question the plausibility of projects to discover the fundamental features of rationality in order to provide semantic infrastructure to tackle as yet unspecified issues across a plurality of different domains. There may well indeed be advantages to the artificial reform of language to obtain a

specific form of rationality within a specified *local domain* (such as a technical or specialised language where, for example, there may be advantages to having a parsimonious formal vocabulary in which to model phenomenon), but this is not sufficient to make the case for a thin conception of rationality *in general*, given that in many situations there are likely to be distinct pragmatic advantages in the expressive range and nuance of natural language in complex human interactions and negotiations with phenomena.

If philosophers aspire to, for example, advance understanding of social and cultural concepts, an artificial *aprioristic* meta-language may not be the best tool for the job. Indeed, according to this "thicker" view of rationality as mediated through language, if we want to investigate, theorise and advance our understanding of concepts which have been historically central to philosophical investigation – such as "truth", "justice" or "art" – then we cannot afford to be agnostic as to the lives of these concepts, both in the past and in the present, nor the genres of reasoning through which they are dealt with in different contexts. In light of the thick conception of reason, we must look at how they have been put to work – both in the past and in the present. On this view the limits to "armchair inquiries" of any kind begin to look very serious. Whether it comes to mapping rationality or obtaining workable cartographies of the conceptual affordances of our concepts, the "thick" picture of reason in language implies that we may need to augment our investigation with an understanding of the practices, institutions and contexts in which language is actually used. Against several thinkers in the "natural language" branch of the analytic linguistic turn, perhaps "linguistic competence" is not enough, and there is a case to be made for philosophical inquiry being more directly

informed by the historical and empirical study of deployments of concepts and forms of reasoning.

Furthermore, given the historical character of our communicative infrastructure, we cannot assume the enduring relevance of "timeless" philosophical concerns or problems – and perhaps philosophers should instead look towards concepts and forms of reasoning which have traction in the world and which play a more substantive role in giving shape to contemporary life and thought. In this regard we might look towards the work of contemporary philosophers and thinkers in the tradition of critical theory, who proactively look to engage with concepts which have traction in the contemporary world but which have been comparatively understudied – from "dependency" to "debt", "transparency" to "territory" (see, e.g. Fraser & Gordon, 1994; Lazzarato, 2012; Han, 2012; Elden, 2013). In my concluding chapter I shall discuss how the constellation of views drawing on the eighteenth century linguistic turn might inform a more interdisciplinary conception of philosophy as a form of critical praxis that draws on this "thick" picture of reason and language.

I shall finish with a final hermeneutical aside before concluding this chapter. For the last section of this chapter I have focused on the common elements of a picture of language that I argue can be derived from Hamann and Herder's works. My focus here is on a philosophical reading and a reconstruction that can be put into dialogue with later developments as well as with contemporary questions and concerns. In this I follow from Berlin, Taylor and Hacking and others who have made the case for a common picture (what has been called the "HHH" tradition – after Hamann, Herder and Humboldt). However, it is important to note that both Hamann and Herder are clear

about the differences between their views about language. For one thing, Hamann explicitly repudiates the naturalistic picture of language that Herder paints in his 1772 essay for the Berlin Academy. As with other thinkers, no small part of this is theological. Hamann considers Herder's naturalistic picture to underplay the revelatory character of language. As with Michaelis's 1759 essay, Hamann thinks Herder puts the cart before the horse, and focuses on secondary detail rather than substance, which is language's fundamental mediation of creation as a living expression of divinity.

While Forster takes a rather dismissive view of Hamann on the grounds of the "Christian religious mysticism" that underpins his work as opposed to the "perfectly secular" character of Herder's work (Forster, 2010: 309), I'd be inclined to take a more nuanced reading. As Nietzsche will later (in my view very convincingly) argue, the fabric of contemporary Western thought (and *especially* German philosophy) and civilisation is literally *saturated* with organising metaphors, motifs, arguments and values from Christian theology. Ironically this is particularly palpable in the case of Nietzsche's own work – but also in the case of philosophers like Hegel and Marx. Herder is no exception. Compelling broadly secular (or at least non-theological) readings of texts with a strong theological component will often entail more than simply chopping "God-talk".

Kenneth Haynes raises the question: "should Hamann be considered a philosopher at all?" (Haynes, 2007: xviii-xix). From a historical perspective, it is clear that Hamann viewed his texts as theological (and aesthetic, in the broader sense of the term that he advances in his *Aesthetica in Nuce*) incursions into philosophical territory: thick, tightly woven, fragmentary missives cast into hostile territory. It is also clear that Hamann

relished these aspects of his authorship, of disrupting and complicating philosophical enterprise and scholarly society. This disruption was not (as with later thinkers) deconstructive *per se*, nor was it irrational or arational. Hamann *demonstrates* an expressive, thick-rational alternative to what he sees as Kant's austere, thin-rational philosophising. This means that we must proceed with some degree of hermeneutical caution in reading him straightforwardly as a contributor to the German philosophical tradition (as nineteenth century commentators from Hegel to Michelet were prone to doing).

While Haynes raises the question of whether some of his works might be better read in the "tradition of learned wit" rather than in philosophy proper, I would argue that he makes important contributions to German philosophy. However, in doing so we must acknowledge that, as Michael Morton comments, if we wish to read Hamann as a philosopher, we must do so "both selectively and, in part, also against his own intentions" (Morton, 1989: 133). Regardless of his intentions, Hamann's work certainly has important philosophical consequences, which we shall trace the direct and indirect reception of in the following chapter. As Morton succinctly summarises, amongst these philosophically relevant claims is the view that we should "acknowledge the rational dimension necessarily inherent in any form of intelligibility and yet effectively deny the right of (mere) rationalism to speak for the totality of the human being" (134). By contrast, comparatively less hermeneutical work is required to obtain a sense of the relevance of Herder's broadly naturalistic outlook (albeit it with some important theological dimensions and concessions) to secular philosophical enterprise. Several scholars argue that he makes important contributions to the intellectual foundations of anthropology – including, as Forster argues, his "historicist hermeneutics",

"methodological empiricism", contributions to the development of the concept of culture and "pluralist cosmopolitanism" (Zammito, 2002; Forster, 2010: 199-243).

One crucial point of difference that Forster suggests is between what he characterises as Herder's "refined narrow expressivism" and Hamann's "broad expressivism" (Forster, 2010: 107). While he acknowledges that this is a "difficult question to answer", he "tentatively" suggests that narrow expressivism is "more correct" (107). Forster suggests that what he argues is Herder's focus on the "material-perceptual media" of speech and writing, "there is … no need to make room for non-linguistic, non-verbal fundamental vehicles of thought and meaning" (113). In his discussion he gives examples of how – for example – the intelligible interpretation of non-linguistic artworks is dependent on language. I would argue that the issue of whether a narrow or broad expressivism is preferable depends on the context in which we are asking and the question we are attempting to answer. The questions that Forster raises are as follows:

> Is the dependence of thought and meaning on external symbols really one on language and words (in the usual sense of "language" and "words")? Or is it not rather a dependence on a broader range of symbolic media that includes, besides language and words (in the usual sense), also such things as painting, sculpture, and music – so that a person might be able to entertain thoughts and meanings which he could not express in language and words but only in some other symbolic medium? (102)

Forster suggests opts for "narrow expressivism" and proposes that this is the position that Herder advocates in his work. He adds two "concessions" to broad expressionism: that "language's expressiveness is in certain areas deeply dependent on that of the non-linguistic arts", and that "spoken and written language is not the only possible

fundamental vehicle for thought and meaning, but other forms of language, including some which at least border on art, could, and perhaps even to some extent actually do, serve as such fundamental vehicles as well" (113).

I would argue that rather than accepting "narrow expressivism" with concessions and caveats to "broad expressivism", advancing a "broad expressivism" with porous borders between linguistic and non-linguistic forms of media and a broader conception of language is a much more compelling position. I also think that this position is more plausible following on from the picture of "thick rationality" that I have outlined above. If we take seriously the notion the shift from thinking of language as a tool for private mental representation and communication, and towards thinking of it as a social, intersubjective fabric such that meanings and rationalities are best understood in terms of usages, practices and institutions which are entangled with various forms of life – one implication of this is that the site of inquiry shifts from individual intelligibility to collective mediation. As we shall see in the next chapter, this is what Heidegger and Gadamer mean when they say that *language speaks us*. While several thinkers have offered compelling cases for a broader expressivism with reference to discussions about the meaning and expressivity of non-linguistic arts such as music, I would further add that there is a stronger case to be made that in many other areas of human life, our concepts, our rationalities and our genres of sense-making are highly dependent on forms of mediation and communication which are non-linguistic (as argued in Bowie, 2007, 2010b).

For example, many researchers in the history and philosophy of science and in science and technology studies have argued that the production of scientific knowledge

is often best understood as an elaborately structured choreography that includes "non-human" actors and processes such as laboratory equipment, machines, communication devices, peer review protocols, data standards, as well as human scientific investigators (see, e.g. Latour & Woolgar, 1986; Latour, 1993, 2007). Many of these things are arguably an integral part of the reasoning processes and meanings essential to scientific inquiry. Hamann and Herder's work challenges the traditional conception of language as a transparent instrument that autonomous subjects can use to represent and argue about their objects of inquiry, towards a picture which redistributes our communicative infrastructure across a broader range of meaningful media, and portrays it as much more entangled with different settings of life – a point which I develop in relation to Heidegger and Gadamer below. Their work also anticipates Cassirer's discussion of a broader range of "symbolic forms".

The picture of language articulated in Hamann and Herder's work calls for attention to the complex interdependency between language and forms of media and practice such as painting and music that might not be considered linguistic (in a narrower sense). I would contend that for contemporary philosophy there is a greater danger in drawing an overly sharp distinction between linguistic intelligibility and other forms of non-linguistic practices, rather than in not drawing a distinction which is sharp enough. In many cases I would argue that philosophy remains disproportionately focused on the conceptual *a priori* and *aprioristic* frameworks rather than on looking at how the fabric of thought is contingently articulated and given form in the world. It retains a prejudice for the logical and conceptual, at the expense of other aspects of human understanding and experience which are crucial for negotiating our interactions with each other and with the world.

Charles Taylor tends towards a "broader expressivist" reading of Hamann and Herder, in his discussion of the "whole range of meaningful media" and "the range of symbolic forms" (Taylor, 1985: 216, 235). The emphasis of the dependence of linguistic meanings on non-linguistic social practices in his interpretation also cautions against too narrow a conception of expression. In this vein Taylor writes: "you cannot understand how words relate to things" without understanding "the nature of the (social) activity, the form of life, in which they get so related" (291-292). In his view the "HHH tradition" also entails a shift from understanding language as a conscious representational tool to its plummeting beneath the waves, into a subconscious substrate that structures human thought, worlds and activities. Ian Hacking proposes that it is this split in the understanding of human thought and language is what partly underpins the divergence between Chomsky and Foucault in their infamous televised debate (Hacking, 2002: 131-132). As Taylor summarises, according to Hamann and Herder's picture:

> Language is not an assemblage of separable instruments, which lie as it were transparently to hand, and which can be used to marshal ideas, this use being something we can fully control and oversee. Rather it is something in the nature of a web, and to complicate the image, is present as a whole in any one of its parts. To speak is to touch a bit of the web, and this is to make the whole resonate. Because the words we use now only have sense through their place in the whole web, we can never in principle have a clear oversight of the implications of what we say at any moment. Our language is always more than we can encompass; it is in a sense inexhaustible. The aspiration to be in no degree at all a prisoner of language, so dear to Hobbes and Locke, is in principle unrealizable. (231)

In the next chapter I shall examine how this broad expressivist picture of language is further developed by philosophers later in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries – from the Early German Romantics to Nietzsche.

6. The Plasticity of Thought: Novalis to Nietzsche

"What's commonly called reason is only a subspecies of it: namely, the thin and watery sort. There's also a thick, fiery kind that actually makes wit witty, and gives an elasticity and electricity to a solid style." (Schlegel, 1991: 12-13)

In this chapter I look at how Hamann and Herder's conception of language is refined, developed and extended in the century following their metacritiques of Kant – from the Early German Romantics in the late eighteenth century, to Nietzsche's works towards the end of the nineteenth century. The Early German Romantics follow Hamann and Herder's metacritical move of recontextualising thin conceptions of philosophical rationality within a broader conception of life, history, society and nature in order to argue that such conceptions should not be abandoned, but rather considered in a manner which is commensurate with their comparatively limited role in a broader ecology of thought, meaning and experience. They also develop a "broad expressivist" conception of language in order to accommodate a wider range of meaningful media, and to enable a richer, more expressive, more versatile repertoire of different linguistic modes beyond the focus on designation and information encoding – placing an emphasis on the creativity and multimodality, rather than the purity, of linguistically mediated reason. Nietzsche's take on the linguistic turn focuses on how language reflects and articulates different kinds of social worlds – with a focus on the values, ideals and metaphors which organise collective life. While his influential early essay "Truth and Lie in an Extramoral Sense" will become an important point of reference for

philosophy and theory associated with other turns to language in the twentieth century, the conception of experience advanced in this account arguably reverts to a kind of pre-Kantian empiricism which is much less compelling than Hamann and Herder's account. His later works elaborate a more compelling picture of the role of language in organising social worlds, and how language may reflect or embody contestation between different regimes of value. I highlight two main aspects of his work: genealogical inquiry as a means to reflexively interrogate the contingent development of linguistically mediated reason, and a performative conception of philosophy which aspires not only to interpret but also to change our linguistic traditions.

The Early German Romantics on the Movement and Musicality of Reason

In the last chapter I looked at the development of Hamann and Herder's ideas about the relationship between reason, language and experience. In particular, I looked at how these ideas evolved in response to both debates about language around the Berlin Academy and Kant's transcendental philosophy which sought to establish the limits of reason as well as to understand and clarify the conditions of possibility for experience. The picture of language which comes to fruition in Hamann and Herder's works remained central to philosophy over the coming decades – informing a very fertile period of innovation spanning the period between the publication of Kant's *Critique* in 1781 and the death of Hegel in 1831. This period saw important contributions from the Early German Romantics – including the brothers Friedrich and August Schlegel, Friedrich Schleiermacher, Ludwig Tieck and Friedrich von Hardenberg (who wrote under the pseudonym Novalis). The extended network around this group included philosophers such as Hegel and Schelling. At various points members of this network

were in close contact with the philosopher, linguist and educational reformer Wilhelm von Humboldt, who influenced and was influenced by some of their ideas about language, partly through periods spent living in Jena.

This period has been comparatively neglected in Anglophone histories of philosophy. Recently there has been a rise of interest in this period, as evidenced by the publication of a series of monographs and multivolume collections, as well as with translations of important German language expositions and interpretations (see, e.g. Ameriks, 2000; Beiser, 1993, 2006; Bowie, 1996, 1999, 2003, 2010a, 2013a; Boyle, Disley, & Ameriks, 2013; Chaouli, 2002; Forster, 2010, 2011a; Frank, 2004; Heinrich, 2008; Kompridis, 2006; Millan-Zaibert, 2000, 2007; Nassar, 2013, 2014; Pinkard, 2002; Safranski, 2014; Saul, 2009; Wirth & Burke, 2014; Wirth, 2015). Broader interest has also been fuelled by recent readings of the works of thinkers from this period in support of contemporary philosophical projects – such as Slavoj Žižek's reading of Schelling in support of his Lacanian Marxism or Iain Hamilton Grant's interpretation of him as an important resource for more recent "material turns" (see, e.g., Žižek, 2007; Grant, 2008). In his recent work, Michael Forster has made a broad and compelling case for the centrality of what he describes as the "Herder-Hamann tradition" for views about language during this period – including its influence on Schleiermacher, Schlegel, Humboldt, Hegel and beyond (Forster, 2010, 2011a). His two books contribute much needed reconstructions, clarity and context for these thinkers' views and arguments about language (though I argue that the "broad expressivist" view of language is more compelling than the "narrow expressivism" that he advocates).

In the current context I shall limit myself to picking out a few key points and moves from thinkers during this period in order to demonstrate how they challenge and complicate the analytic linguistic turn, and provide resources for a more convincing "thick" conception of reason as linguistically mediated and socially and historically situated – which philosophers can aspire not only to analyse, but also to participate in and contribute to through their work. Central to my argument are the views of philosophical reason put forward by the Early German Romantics. Against interpretations which read romantic philosophers from this period as irrationalist, arational, anti-rational counter-Enlightenment figures, recent accounts have argued that their work signals a shift towards more holistic and balanced forms of philosophical reasoning as opposed to the myopic narrow-mindedness of maximising a formal-logical conception of rationality to the exclusion of other faculties, and modes of thought, understanding and sense-making (see, e.g. Millan-Zaibert, 2000; Beiser, 2006: 43-55; Nassar, 2013). While they are critical of attempts to *totalise* "thin" formal-logical philosophical systems, they were by not opposed to systems and systematisations *per se*, as we shall explore below.

Indeed, to the extent that the early German romantics can be considered to have a common project, this might be understood in terms of the convergence of Kant's critical philosophy and Hamann and Herder's conception of "thick" linguistically mediated reason. For our purposes this can be considered to be a combination of (i) what we might characterise – following Habermas (e.g. 1999b) – as a broadly "detranscendentalising" perspective with (ii) a modified philosophical aspiration for unity and universality. The combination of these two stances in German Romanticism

inspired a range of influential philosophical projects – from Hegel's world-historical rationality to Habermas's conception of "communicative rationality".

Many of the Early Romantics portray philosophy as an expressive craft which aims not only to reflect on and make sense of the world as a unity, but also to remake it in accordance with their romantic ideals. This is driven by an aspiration to bring together and to resynthesise what overly rationalistic philosophers were accused of prising apart. In their works we find blends of poetry and politics, technology and theology, science and sexuality intended to bring about new analogical insights and intellectually and creatively productive combinations. Rather than rejecting scientific and technological ways of knowing, the romantics sought to integrate them as part of a broader, unified conception of life, nature and the human spirit. They drew on the naturalism, historical sensibility and analytical drive of the Enlightenment, as well as a holism that was very Hamannian in character. While Enlightenment narratives often utilised naturalistic and historical frames to fashion their accounts of diverse practices, objects and ideas into a coherent narrative, thinkers in the German Romantic period strove for a holism that was more multivalent, dialectical, and relational, rather than making sense of things with reference to a single explanatory mode. This anticipates some of the hermeneutically playful tendencies commonly associated with post-structuralism (see, e.g. Bowie, 2013a; Newmark, 2012). However, as Manfred Frank rightfully points out any such comparison must be moderated with an understanding of the Early German Romantics' overarching concern with "the Absolute" (Millán-Zaibert, 2007: 39-40). Hamann's insistence on the persistence of the manifold individuality of phenomena within the ultimate unity of creation can be considered analogous with this concern.

Many Early German Romantic thinkers a strong interest in the power of dialectical tension, and the desire to harness this as an engine for creative and intellectual expression. This is particularly exemplified in the works of Novalis, Schlegel and Schleiermacher (as I shall discuss below), as well as in Hegel's dialectical conception of rationality, Schelling's interest in tensions, and Nietzsche's interest in the unexpected dynamics of contingent historical antagonisms. A sentiment like this finds its way into the works of Adorno and Benjamin in the twentieth century – for example in the negative dialectics of the former and the concept of the dialectical image in the latter. The romantic notion of the productive juxtaposition of elements in tension is closely related to an interest in the *movement* of thought – including its performativity, musicality, colour and rhythm. This mirrors the shift away from epistemological justification to creation, from proof to poetry and performance that can be found in Hamann and Herder's metacritiques of Kant. The philosophical implications of views about the relationships between reason, language and music during this period has been studied by Andrew Bowie (Bowie, 2007). As Bowie compellingly argues, the notion of schematism plays a central role in connecting these three elements, in looking at how language and music (rather than Kant's transcendental categories) give form and shape to thought and experience. The German Romantics' reading of Kant follows Hamann and Herder in their linguistic and historical re-appropriation of the former's transcendental analysis. They augment this with their own emphasis on Kant's views on the *creative* and *productive* (as opposed to merely passive) role of human understanding in shaping experience. This combination of elements – the free play of a historically and linguistically mediated reason, dialectically and musically progressing towards the in-practice-unattainable but nevertheless hermeneutically vital regulatory ideal of "the absolute" – is presented as an alternative to the search for foundations.

After setting the scene for the broader philosophical project of the Early German Romantics, I shall proceed to look at how they develop the picture of language discussed in the previous chapter – commencing with Friedrich Schlegel. It is from Schlegel that I derive the contrast between "thick" and "thin" conceptions of rationality, which he alludes to in the quote which opens this chapter. It is crucial to note that Schlegel follows Hamann and Herder in not *dismissing* thin reason, but in seeing it as a late addition to a "thick" conception of reason as mediated by language as a social and historical phenomenon. While Hamann and Herder's metacritiques foreground the linguistic institutions upon which Kant's pure reason is dependent, Schlegel and the German Romantics go a step further by advocating the *creative* use of formalised systems of pure reason. Hence Novalis describes rationalist philosophy and the quest for "pure thought" and "pure experience" as a kind of "magical idealism" (Novalis, 2012: 152, §826) in the service of *romanticisation* or *poetisation* in order to creatively transform perception or provide a palette of abstracted elements for recomposition. In this vein he claims that there are strong affinities between mathematics and music, drawing structural connections between numbers, vowels and the grammatical construction of language, adding that "language is a musical instrument of ideas" (97, §547).

However, while recognising the role that thin rationality could play within the broader ecology of human understanding, Schlegel opposes the totalisation of thin reason to the exclusion of other forms. For example, he argues for the importance of recognising the fundamental historicity of reason. In this regard Schlegel argues that Kant's critical project does not go far enough, and accuses him of being a "half-critic" because of his neglect of the history of philosophy (Millán-Zaibert, 2007: 89-90).

Philosophical reason is essentially historical, and attempting to philosophise without any historical dimension is to philosophise naively and uncritically:

> [A] critique of philosophizing reason cannot succeed without a history of philosophy. [This] is proved to us by Kant himself. His work as a critique of philosophizing reason is not at all historical enough even though it is filled with historical relations and he attempts to construct various systems. (Frank, 2004: 13-14)

Like Hamann and Herder, he laments philosophers' exaltation of mathematics as the predominant model for philosophy, arguing that philosophy "mars" its "proper form" when "it attempts to mimic the rigorous method of mathematics", and as it presents "mere example of accurate computation" as bringing the world "nearer to the truth" to "something higher" (Schlegel, 1855: 14). Rather than sticking rigidly to one conceptual and rationalistic mode which privileges deductive calculation or logical argumentation (as examined in chapters two and four), Schlegel suggests that we should look at philosophies of pure reason historically – as part of the arguments and counter-arguments of the "ever-growing tree of human consciousness" which evolves in relation to different forms of life and historical settings (Schlegel, 1855: 15). To be truly critical, philosophy must explicitly recognise and engage with its own contingent development. Schlegel holds that despite its many innovations, Kant's *Critique* fails to address the contingency and historicity of the linguistically mediated fabric of thought upon which his critical project depends.

Schlegel shares Hamann and Herder's suspicion of the philosophical zeal for purification, precision and conceptual clarification. The abstract reasoning and conceptual analysis of rationalist philosophers predominates at the expense of

recognising other communicative capacities of language. Wit, style, irony, emotion, art, philological sensitivity, historical understanding, and cultural literacy also play a crucial role in philosophical inquiry. "Philosophy is the real homeland of irony" (1991: 5), he suggests. Throughout his work, Schlegel contends that irony is an invaluable aspect of philosophical reason. While Schlegel recognises the paradigmatic role of irony in Plato's dialogues of Socrates (as highlighted by Hamann), he also advances a conception of irony as a momentary flash gesturing towards the infinite by means of the finite – as a way of pointing beyond (Bowie, 1996: 69). There is clearly a performative dimension to his conception of irony, and he also portrays it as functioning in a way which is much more complex and sophisticated than – for example – the modes of designation discussed in the analytical philosophical tradition. The fact that philosophers have often tried to boil down the expressive wealth of language exemplified by his analysis of the concept of irony, is partly what motivates Schlegel's renowned claim that "poetry and philosophy should be made one" (1991: 14) – a call which has subsequently been echoed by countless writers and thinkers, from Nietzsche's insistence on the value of style in philosophy (Nehemas, 1985), to Jorge Luis Borges's speculations about metaphysics as "a branch of the literature of fantasy" (Borges, 1999: 74), to Richard Rorty's affirmation that philosophy may indeed be fruitfully read as "a branch of literature" (Rorty, 1987: 572).

Schlegel's vision of philosophy is one of perpetual longing and striving, rather than of establishing and building on firm foundations. In this sense he differs from his predecessors who are concerned by the lack of foundations, and motivated by the prospect of securing solid ground from which philosophy could grow – from Kant's critical conception of pure reason, to Fichte's self-positing "I". Alluding to a classical

literary device in epic poetry, Schlegel argues that philosophy cannot but begin "*in medias res*", in the middle of things. He preferred to think of love – that is, eternal striving towards, but never fully reaching, the object of love – rather than certainty as a central metaphor for philosophising. He considers the culture and ethics of love to be more edifying than the formal foundations of Kant's systematic philosophy. Like Hamann and Herder, Schlegel is critical of the philosophical zeal for system-building. "It is equally fatal for the mind to have a system and to have none", he writes, "it will simply have to decide to combine the two" (1991: 24) – arguing that philosophers should aspire towards thought which is *systematic* rather than constructing systems *per se*. As an alternative to system-building, Schlegel advocates a programme of philosophy which would place emphasis on the maturation of the thinker through an ongoing process of *Bildung* (education or development). The concept of *Bildung* is central for Herder and later, notably, for thinkers such as Hegel and Gadamer. For these thinkers *Bildung* is conceived of as a holistic programme of education and experience that supports the becoming and self-realisation of the learning subject.

For Schlegel, Goethe's 1795-6 *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, which Novalis calls the "Absolute Novel" (Bernstein, 2003: 229), exemplifies this broader conception of individual growth and development, depicting – as Schlegel puts it in his 1798 review – in "high, pure poetry" (275), "the education [*Bildung*] of an aspiring spirit quietly unfolding" (269, translation modified) and his "apprentice years in the art of living" (277). Schlegel's account of the protagonist Wilhelm's "infinite impulse towards education [*unendlicher Bildungstrieb*]" (278), reflects his views about the aims, virtues and limits of philosophy. He admires the continual "feeling, willing, aspiring" (271) of Wilhelm, as well as the lightness and wit of Goethe's portrayal of his development. The

characters are not without their flaws and limitations (which make them human), and Wilhelm's striving for cultivation and growth is an imperfect process, characterised by its provisionality and incompleteness. The concept of *Bildung* corresponds with a shift from the externalisation of philosophical thought into formalised systems, towards seeing philosophy as a process performed by embodied human subjects in a state of ongoing learning and development. Given the broader theological background to these philosophical debates that shaped the cultural and intellectual environment in the eighteenth century (as discussed in chapters two and three), this shift may also be considered in light of the Pietist emphasis on the development of the conscience and inner spiritual life of the believer in the New Testament, as opposed to the observance of external and pre-determined rules of the Pharisees in the Old Testament. This also echoes Hamann's critiques of the historically objectivising, naturalistic or philological study of the letter of the law (as per his readings of Michaelis), at the expense of awareness of language as a living and evolving process.

Like other Early German Romantic thinkers, Friedrich Schlegel thinks that philosophical genius was much more like literary or musical genius than the aptitude for the derivation and application of mechanistic procedures. Schlegel suggests that philosophy should be driven by the free intellectual inquiry and creative engagement of the philosopher with and through the traditions and structures which shape their thought. The true philosopher should be a virtuoso, and capable of switching between modes, discourses, and drawing on arguments and evidence from different times, places, genres and disciplines "quite arbitrarily, just as one tunes an instrument, at any time and to any degree" (1991: 7). As we shall examine further in the next chapter on language, there was a strong connection between German romantic conceptions of what

it meant to do philosophy, and theories of literary and aesthetic creation. Schlegel and others argue that Kant's vision of philosophy as a means to overcome illusions and establish limits is inadequate, and that philosophers can also contribute to the more substantive task of creatively articulating visions, values and ideals.

Schlegel holds that not only do the philosophers of pure reason risk fetishising an "empty and totally abstract mode of thinking, which is divorced from life and the realities of things", but that they risk uncritically inheriting all kinds of presumptions and presenting them as part of an objective philosophical worldview. In this sense the rationalistic critical philosophy which claims to challenge authority and tradition, and purify the understanding from prejudice is surprisingly uncritical and naïve about its own origins and status (Schlegel, 1855). Hence, he writes, with apparently abstract and technical philosophical systems we may find that:

> […] we have only to pierce through the systematic exterior to find that it is nothing but an ill-connected and chance-medley of conflicting assumptions and opinions taken from all quarters, and the crude views of the author himself, devoid of all solidity, and resting on no firm basis, without character, and wholly destitute of true intrinsic unity?

"Every proof already presupposes something proved" (Frank, 2004: 205) and philosophers ignore the way in which language, culture and society structure and mediate their understanding of the world at their peril.

Rather than engaging with contingency and historicity of their thought, philosophers very often long for a fresh start: to demolish the systems of their predecessors to make way for new, clearer, more comprehensive systems. However, these new systems are

ultimately inevitably condemned to the same fate as their forebears, leaving us with nothing but Babylonian ruins, abstract "lifeless stones" like cryptic messages without a key. This "dead and abstract thinking" is thinking that has been "reduced to empty lifeless formulae", like coins whose "stamp of intrinsic truth is quickly abraded and lost" (a metaphor which Nietzsche also famously employs in his "Truth and Lie in an Extramoral Sense" a few decades later). Schlegel argues that the best way to make sense of these philosophical remains is to examine them historically, rather than taking them at face value.

Schlegel argues that philosophy should not be conceived as a narrow, technical discipline focused on identifying and rectifying errors in our thought, nor as aspiring to construct a formal architecture of the understanding in the form of a philosophical system, but rather as the process of developing the understanding dialogically by breathing life into a constellation of empathetic readings of exemplary texts and a wide variety of different views and positions, drawing on the full range of human beings' capacity for communication and expression. According to many of the thinkers associated with German Romanticism, thought, like nature, should be dynamic, alive and in motion. Schlegel contrasts the zeal for abstraction, formalisation and mechanisation of thought with a vision in which philosophy is a living process which is continually rearticulated through the creative interpretation of life and tradition, as takes place in literature, music or the visual arts. Rather than securing gains through the application of logical proofs or formal demonstrations, Schlegel holds that philosophy should progress by means of allegory, irony and wit, through dialectical explorations driven by a love of wisdom that aspires but never fully attains. Philosophy should be pieced together through "sketches, studies, fragments, tendencies, ruins and materials"

(Frank, 2004: 213). Philosophical insights are necessarily tentative, fragile, one-sided and incomplete – reflecting the "fragmentary character of human consciousness" (Frank, 2004: 216) in its attempt to grasp the complexity and heterogeneity of life. Schlegel holds that such insights are much more likely to come about through flashes of illumination induced by the aesthetic dimensions of exemplary prose or productive tensions between different positions, rather than through system building or logical analysis. As we saw with Hamann and Herder, for Schlegel philosophical reasoning is part of the same universe of meaning as science, law, theological texts, artworks and ordinary discourse. And like Hamann and Herder, Schlegel sees poetry rather than mathematical proof as paradigmatic for philosophy in its ability to illuminate, and – like other romantics – sees philosophy as fundamentally connected to other disciplines in part of a broader programme for *Bildung*.

This vision is shared by other thinkers associated with the early romantic circle, like Friedrich Schleiermacher and Novalis, who consider poetry, art and dialogue better models for understanding philosophy than mathematical calculation. As we shall see, language is central in both thinkers' conception of philosophy. Novalis is critical of the philosophical tendency to break things down into atomic facts and the aspiration to develop a calculus with which to mechanise and externalise reason:

> The crude, discursive thinker is the scholastic. The true scholastic is given to mystical subtleties. He builds his universe out of logical atoms. He destroys all living nature in order to put a mental trick in its place – his goal is infinite automaton. (Novalis, 1997: 49)

Novalis considers formal logic to be a kind of extrapolation from the grammar of natural language (51), a point which would be later explored by Nietzsche, Wittgenstein

and others. Like Schlegel, Novalis contrasts the pallid abstractions of logical philosophy with the living thought of poetry, which he thinks is a much better exemplar for philosophical inquiry than mathematics, mechanics or logic in and of themselves. As he writes in an aphorism titled "philosophical pathology": "an absolute drive towards perfection and completeness is an illness", and "destructive and averse towards the *imperfect*, the incomplete", which is an essential characteristic of all human knowledge (131). Like Hamann, Novalis thinks that "language is a poetic invention" and that language profoundly shapes our experience of the world such that "all revelations and phenomena … are poetic in origin" (129). Language does not just interfere with our ability to see the world clearly, but is implicated in its disclosure. In this sense language is a precondition for experiencing the world.

Rather than abandoning or turning away from the more formal operations of mathematics and logic, Novalis suggests they should be combined with other disciplines to create a higher art or science, which put formal reasoning to work in the service of a broader project of romanticising the world and creating new mythologies and forms of reflection that draw on both the arts and the sciences. Hence, he says, "every branch of learning becomes poetry" (132), coordinated by the imagination which he considers an "extramechanical power" (135). Like Schlegel, Novalis calls for a more balanced ecology of reason, understanding and the imagination (155). Schleiermacher also holds that philosophising cannot be purely mechanical or rule based, and that philosophy is an art based on "disposition and talent" (Schleiermacher, 1996: 62). He also agrees that deductive reasoning is contingent upon on the formation of concepts which are different in different languages and which change over time (57). He argued that conversation (as exemplified by the Platonic dialogues) rather than calculation, is the *sine qua non* of the

understanding, and that only by means of dialectic, the "organon of all sciences" is "genuine knowing possible" (7). For Schleiermacher, dialectics is an approach to resolving disputes through conversation. However, unlike Leibniz's formal approach to dispute resolution with reference to a formalised metalanguage of purified concepts, Schleiermacher pays heed to the evolving character of our linguistic capacities – suggesting that the schematism that organises our thoughts is a "living drive" and that, as Bowie puts it, "true concepts do not pre-exist in a 'Platonic' manner; they are, rather, the normatively constituted aim of the activity of thought in a community" (Bowie, 1998: xxii). This conception of dialectics effectively shifts the emphasis from establishing and refining the enduring "rules of the game" to attentiveness to how conversation is enacted as a living, evolving process which entails more complex dynamics than are accounted for through a formal calculus with only a few simple operators.

Romantic reservations about the nature, possibility and potential of pure reason had a significant impact on European philosophy in the nineteenth century and beyond. Notably, they profoundly shaped Hegel's social and historical conception of reason. Hegel appreciated the importance of Kant's critique of pure reason and its exposition of the limitations of dogmatic metaphysics through the antinomies (which, as examined above, presented arguments in support of metaphysical theses, followed by arguments for their antithesis, and then a brief explanation about the inadequacy of pure reason alone in addressing the question posed). However, like Schlegel, Hegel thought that Kant did not go far enough with his critique, and contended that he neglected the historical dimensions and dialogical motion of his ideas. Hegel held that Kant's obsession with deriving an unconditioned, external standard for truth led him away from

investigating the logic of the concepts we use, to "radically abstract thinking" which was "in fact nothing but empty understanding" (Hegel, 1991: 100; cf. Beiser, 2005: 156-159). Like his early romantic contemporaries, Hegel rejected a mechanical, calculating ideal of reason modelled on mathematics (Beiser, 2005: 80ff). "Although these [mathematical] methods are essential, and are brilliantly successful in their own field", he wrote, "they cannot be used for philosophical cognition" (Hegel, 1991: 299). In his lectures on the history of philosophy, Hegel ridicules the "barbarism of pedantry" of Wolff's syllogistic exercises (Hegel, 1896: 356), invoking by now familiar metaphors about their "wooden and lifeless" and "contentless" "barrenness" (353-354), and poking fun at Wolff's attempt to derive insights about architecture and military strategy through means of mathematically inspired syllogisms (355). According to Hegel, Wolff's dogmatic popularisation of mathematics as a model for philosophy served to bring about "definite consciousness of the reason why the geometric method is not the only and ultimate method of knowledge" and "an immediate consciousness of the foolishness of its applications" (356). Rather than dismissing these naïve views about reason *per se*, Hegel argued, like Schlegel, that we should step back and see them as particular moments within a broader history of the evolution of human philosophical consciousness like branches in a tree, branches which have contributed in their own way towards the development of the linguistically mediated worlds of thought which we inhabit today.

Hegel favoured a conception of reason which was "thick", historical, organic and dialectical, against the "thin", narrow, formal conception of his philosophical forebears. He argues that reason is a fundamental part of the structure of the world and of human consciousness. In an infamous passage in his lectures on the philosophy of history, a

passage whose meaning is still heavily disputed amongst scholars, Hegel argues that "reason governs the world, and that world history is therefore a rational process" (Hegel, 2011: 79). This is the culmination of a line of thinking which inverts the philosophical project for the purification of reason, instead arguing that reason is articulated and manifested in history. Thus in order to understand reason we need to look beyond projects of formalisation and purification and towards an understanding of it as a historically situated medium, embodied in living subjects whose experience of the world is constituted through their relations to others. While Hegel's – often laudatory – review of Hamann presents him as overly singular and incapable of systematic thought (Hegel, 2008), in fact Hamann and Herder's social and historical conception of linguistically mediated rationality was an important predecessor to Hegel's own work.

Nietzsche on the Fabrication of Linguistic Worlds

The pictures of language and reason advanced by the Early German Romantics, Humboldt and Hegel exercised a profound influence on later thinkers into the nineteenth century and beyond. Their challenging and complication of "thin" conceptions of rationality, and insistence on the social and historical nature of human reason and thought can be seen as the background for the more radical detranscendentalising programmes of the triumvirate of late nineteenth century thinkers whom Paul Ricœur would later dub "the masters of suspicion": Sigmund Freud, Karl Marx and Friedrich Nietzsche (Ricœur, 1970: 32). These three thinkers explored the discrepancies between stories of autonomous, self-transparent, rational agency in morality, politics and philosophy, and proposed to recontextualise human agency and

rationality within broader pictures that took account of other forces at play – from subconscious sexual drives, to economic and class structures, to subterranean power dynamics operating in the most unexpected ways. In this section I shall look at how Nietzsche took up a "thick" conception of rationality, and the role that this played in relation to some of his key ideas: from the genealogical analysis of concepts, to his view of a future philosophy as a creative force to reshape the human values which organise collective life in a post-theological world.

Nietzsche's comments about language are scattered throughout his works – most notably in his 1873 "Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense", his 1882 *The Gay Science* (in particular the much studied fragment §354), his 1886 *Beyond Good and Evil* and in other unpublished writings from the mid to late 1880s (see, respectively, Nietzsche, 1989: 246-257, 1974, 1966, 2003, 1968). As Claudia Crawford contends, Nietzsche's writings "evince a complex, constantly modified and developing view of language", influenced by a wide range of different sources, and addressing a broad range of different concerns (Crawford, 1988: 1). Hence it might be better to think of Nietzsche's works on language in terms of a plethora of sketches in productive dialectical tension with each other (perhaps more like Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*), rather than a single architectural plan. This is commensurate with Nietzsche's inheritance of a dynamic conception of philosophy as a movement, rather than as a system. Here I shall argue that whilst his earlier works (such as "Truth and Lie") advance a conception of language draws on an implausible pre-Kantian conception of experience (and which are thus less plausible than Hamann and Herder's works which draw on Kant's transcendental analytic), his later works provide many interesting resources for thinking through the implications of a "thick" conception of linguistically mediated reason –

including proposals about the role of genealogical inquiry, and about the performative function of philosophy in shaping the fabric of thought.

Much like the Early German Romantics, Nietzsche tends to prefer to model philosophy on musical movement and expressive performativity over rational justification or argument *per se*. As with the romantics, this of course does not mean that philosophy should not aspire to be *systematic* or to articulate logical and conceptual structure, but rather that these things are not the predominantly criteria on which the success of philosophy should be judged. Both Nietzsche and the Early Romantics introduce a stronger sense of the expressivity, affectivity and musicality of philosophy. Nietzsche also presents his writings as edifying in a manner which shares much with the Romantic conception of *Bildung*, as pragmatic spurs for the development of his readers, towards the flourishing of "life", rather than contributing to reactive rationalisation. In this vein he suggests that "we never communicate thoughts", but rather "movements" which can be "*read backwards*" in retrospect as thoughts (Constâncio & Branco, 2011: 46). As with Hamann, Herder and the Early German Romantics before him, Nietzsche is a thinker whose work is explicitly performative, gesturing towards, enacting and embodying his views about language and rationality as much as arguing for them.

What does Nietzsche take from and share with the thinkers we have examined so far in this chapter and the last? While I am not primarily concerned with the question of influence, I shall briefly touch on this before further exploring how Nietzsche adds to our story about reason, language and experience. Nietzsche was clearly acquainted with the works of Hamann and Herder, which he alludes to in several places throughout his corpus. For example, in a letter in 1873, Nietzsche wrote that the Hamann was "very

deep and profound", that he felt "very edified" in reading him, and that in doing so "one sees into the birthplace of our German literary and philosophical culture" (Nietzsche, 1988: 46). While he is less kind about Herder (for example saying he was "no great poet and inventor" and "none of the things he induced others to suppose he was"), he nevertheless affirms that he possessed "fire and enthusiasm" and an "ability to scent the wind" (Nietzsche, 1986: 338, §118). Christian Emden suggests that Nietzsche may also have been acquainted with lectures by Wilhelm Wackernagel, one of his fellow professors in philology at the University of Basel including one titled "Über den Ursprung und die Entwicklung der Sprache" ("On the Origin and Development of Language") which was predominantly based on Herder's work on the origin of language (Emden, 2005: 63-64). Wackernagel's lecture describes how language originally was originally poetic and became increasingly abstract – losing touch with its sensual origin as it developed. The lecture was published in 1872, the same year that Nietzsche's influential essay "Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense" was composed.

Many commentators have argued that there are striking resemblances between Nietzsche's view of language and those of Hamann and Herder (see, e.g. Crawford, 1988; Parkes, 1996; Emden, 2005; Zusi, 2006; Betz, 2008; Forster, 2011a; Sikka, 2011; Constâncio & Branco, 2011, 2012; Gray, 2012). Others have commented on the affinities between Nietzsche's ideas and those of the Early German Romantics (Bowie, 2013a; Forster, 2011a; Gray, 2009; Richardson & Gemes, 2013). Judith Norman has argued against this last point, suggesting that "the influence simply is not there" and that Nietzsche "does not belong to this historical lineage" of the Early German Romantics (Norman, 2002: 519). I would argue that whilst it is important to analytically distinguish between their overall philosophical projects (where there are indeed some important

differences), this is not incompatible with there being significant affinities between different aspects of their work. In my introduction I proposed a metaphor of the history of philosophy as a kind of a multidimensional space in which philosophers occupy different positions and possess different relationships to each other in relation to different topics, positions which are continually redefined with new readings, interpretations and reconstructions. With this kind of model, we can obtain a sharper analytical picture of the affinities and contrasts between different kinds of philosophical projects. For example, the fact that Schlegel and Nietzsche have different views about temporality, the absolute, Plato or the New Testament does not preclude them from having overlapping views about music, schematism, Euripides or Apollo and Dionysus (Bowie, 2013a; Henrichs, 2004). In this sense I will argue that there are substantive philosophical overlaps between Nietzsche and the Early German Romantics, which I shall highlight in my discussion below.

One of the most important threads running through Nietzsche's ideas about reason, language and experience is what I shall characterise as the *fabrication* of language. I have chosen this term as it possesses a connotative range which resonates with some of Nietzsche's recurring concerns, as well as drawing on the "fabric of thought" metaphor which is the title of this thesis. I shall argue that this notion of fabrication can help us to make sense of how Nietzsche thinks about reinterpreting and reshaping linguistic worlds. The *Oxford English Dictionary* gives two main definitions for the word "fabrication". The first definition is "the action or process of fabricating" (as in "construction, fashioning, manufacture") or "the process of fabricating in the manufacture of finished products". The second definition is "the action of fabricating or 'making up'", "invention (of a statement)" or "forging (of a document)". These two

definitions correspond quite neatly with two key claims that Nietzsche makes about language. Firstly, Nietzsche claims that language is fabricated in the sense that it is manufactured by human beings, as opposed to somehow issuing directly from the world (or from another hidden world beyond or beneath it). Nietzsche draws on the "thick" conception of rationality as a historical and social fabric, as something composed, intersubjective, materially mediated, evolving and world-projecting. This is reinforced by his metaphors of language as a "social" and in some sense "natural" (which I shall qualify below) product-in-progress created by creatures – comparable to spider's web, hives of beeswax or anthills on the one hand, or architectural edifices on the other. In this sense he builds on – and, I shall argue, goes further than – the naturalising and detranscendentalising approach to language exemplified in the eighteenth century linguistic turn around the Berlin Academy. Secondly, Nietzsche argues that language is fabricated in the sense of being a fiction, something which is "made up". His claims about this second point vary throughout his work. In different periods and texts, he suggests that language lies, misleads, simplifies and fictionalises. Sometimes he implies that language highlights or articulates certain aspects of the world, and in other places he suggests – much less plausibly – that language "lies" about the world. On the one hand, he draws on a picture of language as projecting fictitious worlds in which we live, are entangled and which structure our experience. This is the sense in which language compels us to be "much more of an artist than one knows" (Nietzsche, 1996: §192). On the other hand, he sometimes makes stronger claims that all that we know and experience is predicated on "error". Here I shall make a distinction between his weaker and stronger claims regarding this second kind of fabrication – suggesting that the weaker version (that language is a fiction) is much more plausible that the stronger claim (that language is a lie).

While his 1873 "Truth and Lie" essay has perhaps become Nietzsche's best known and most influential text on language, knowledge and truth, we may also find anticipations of some of its main themes in a short essay called "On the Origin of Language" from 1869-1870. Echoing earlier claims from Hamann, Herder and Humboldt, in this essay he writes that "all conscious thought is possible only with the help of language" (Nietzsche, 1989: 209). He explicitly discusses the Berlin Academy essay prize on the origins of language in the 1770s, as well as views on this topic from Plato, Rousseau, Maupertuis, Herder, Kant and Schelling. He concludes with a quote from Schelling which is essential for his argument:

> Since without language no philosophical consciousness, indeed no consciousness at all, is conceivable, the foundation of language could not be laid with consciousness; and yet the deeper we penetrate into it, the more definitely we discover that its depth far exceeds that of the most conscious product. Language's situation is like that of organic beings; we believe we see them originating blindly and yet we cannot deny the unfathomable intentionality of their formation down to every detail. (211)

Like Herder, Nietzsche suggests that it is implausible to think of language as the product of consciousness. Thus he writes: "language is neither the conscious work of individuals nor of a plurality", arguing that it is "much too complex to be the work of a single individual" and "much too unified to be the work of a mass" (209).

His proposed solution to this "old riddle" is to suggest that language is "the product of an instinct, like among the bees – the anthill, etc.", defining instinct as "the most proper achievement of the individual, of a mass, stemming from its very character". He praises Kant for recognising the "remarkable paradox" that "something can be

purposeful without a consciousness", which is the "essence of instinct" (211). This view shares something with discussions of the "genius" of language around the Berlin Academy, the particular character that a language has as a result of the live circumstances, practices and institutions of "a people". In one sense, he draws on this Enlightenment tradition of providing natural historical accounts of human cultures, societies and institutions (though this must be modified with some important caveats about his conception of "nature" and "naturalising", as I shall suggest below). Thus he focuses on the subterranean instincts, drives and forces which have shaped the emergence of the conscious human world which philosophers try to make sense of on its own terms (thereby missing a crucial point). He suggests that "the development of conscious thinking is harmful to language", adding that "decadence is caused by advanced culture" and that "the formal element" of language, that which has "philosophical value", is "damaged". This particular notion of "conscious thinking", closely related to "rational thinking" and opposed to intuitive, instinctive, musical thinking, will be unpacked in greater detail in "Truth and Lie", as well as in *The Birth of Tragedy* which was also published in the same year. A final point in this early essay which it is worth noting: he says that "the deepest philosophical insights are already implicitly contained in language". As an example, he says that "the subject and the predicate developed into the categories of substance and accident" (209). This too will become a recurring theme in many of his later comments on language, philosophy and human worlds.

In his 1873 "Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense" Nietzsche opens with a cosmic, "world historical" fable of how "clever animals invented knowledge". The essay epitomises both senses of "fabrication" that I outlined above: the sense in which

language is both *made* and *made up*. He presents this "arrogant and most untruthful moment" of the invention of human knowledge as an inconsequential flicker, just before the extinction of the species, illustrating "how pitiful, how shadowy and fleeting, how purposeless and arbitrary the human intellect appears within nature" (Nietzsche, 1989: 246). The keystone in his conception of the emergence of human knowledge is the development of human language, and his story is indebted to naturalistic and historical accounts of language associated with the eighteenth century linguistic turn. His metaphorical frame contrasting the vibrant rivers and fiery liquid of experience with the dry, brittle architectures of abstract concepts echoes the oppositions between living and dead, flesh and bone, light and dark of Hamann and Herder. He also shares their genealogical and epistemic prioritisation of poetic language which is closer to experience over abstract concepts which risk spinning off into orbit, confusing philosophers with *aprioristic* fictions rather than being attentive to how language actually operates as a complex social and historical set of practices. This follows the eighteenth century inversion of Plato and Aristotle's prioritisation of mathematics over experience. However, perhaps ironically, as a philosophical fable, Nietzsche's account in "Truth and Lie" arguably risks returning to a pre-critical opposition between reason and experience – assigning epistemological priority to experience rather than rationality, rather than building on the more sophisticated model about the relation between reason, language and experience that developed in the wake of the eighteenth century linguistic turn. In this sense Nietzsche's account of language represents a step backwards from Hamann and Herder's respective linguistic metacritiques of Kant, which draw on the latter's transcendental account of the role of human understanding and categories in the production of experience.

Like Herder, Nietzsche believes that linguistic terms originally arose from picking out waves from the ocean of our experience. Over time they come to give structure and form to our experience, to see the world "as" the world. Thus Nietzsche writes – with reference to an example which Herder also uses in his *Metacritique* (see, Sikka, 2011: 202-203) – that we pick out an arbitrary aspect of something in our experience such as the twisting, *schlingen*, of a snake, and then assign it a designator, *Schlange*, the word for snake, literally "twister". Like Herder, Nietzsche points to the arbitrariness of gender and the "one-sidedness" of the properties highlighted by linguistic terms as examples of how language does not so much represent the world as "distort" it. This "artistic metaphor-formation" underpins the fabrication of human lifeworlds. It is the human equivalent of the manufacturing of semantic material, out of which more elaborate edifices can be constructed. However, while Herder's discussions of language emphasise how language articulates new possibilities for experience, Nietzsche's presentation of language as a "lie" often looks like it reverts to a pre-Kantian empiricist epistemology, such that experience is presented as a raw input which grounds our knowledge. Thus he speaks of the "hardening and rigidification of the mass of images that originally gushed forth as hot magma out of the primeval faculty of human fantasy" (252), and portrays the development of language and knowledge as a gradual *departure* from the epistemic superiority of pre-linguistic experience, rather than as the development of an apparatus which provides the conditions of possibility for experiencing the world in ever more rich and subtle ways.

In this sense, Nietzsche polemically presents the development of human knowledge as a kind of hubris, a fall from grace or a departure from a "state of nature". Hence, human beings forget that "the original intuitive metaphors are indeed metaphors" and

mistake them for "the things themselves". In the gradual process of manufacturing human worlds, these rough-hewn metaphors are mistaken for ideal "concepts" and "forms". These concepts in turn form the basis of "schemata", which structure the world (250). The production of human knowledge as a project can be compared to the bee which "simultaneously builds the cells and fills them with honey", such that human knowledge creators work "incessantly at the great columbarium of the concepts", "forever constructing new and ever higher levels, buttressing, cleaning, renovating old cells, and striving especially to fill this enormous towering edifice and to arrange the whole empirical, i.e., anthropomorphic, world in it" (254). These metaphors of the fabrication of knowledge through language, culminate in the following image to represent the "all too human" epistemological institutions of the modern world:

> In this respect man can probably be admired as a mighty architectural genius who succeeds in building an infinitely complicated conceptual cathedral on foundations that move like flowing water; of course, in order to anchor itself to such a foundation, the building must be light as gossamer-delicate enough to be carried along by the wave, yet strong enough not to be blown apart by the wind. (251)

Nietzsche presents this edifice as a sophisticated instrument for survival, facilitating the organisation and ordering of human life and activity. However, in what he does with this account Nietzsche departs from the eighteenth century linguistic turn, and arguably goes into an over-generalised, over-romanticised account that owes more to Rousseau's account of the pre-civilised "noble savage" or to British empiricist accounts which reject rationality in favour of experience than on more developed engagements with language in the post-Kantian philosophical tradition. In this sense "Truth and Lie" is less a philosophical account of language, and more a fable about the hubris of human

knowledge – highlighting the contradictions of the fabric of thought, which is portrayed as more of a kind of Tower of Babel than that which provides the conditions of possibility for experience, thought and social action. The following passage in particular was to exercise a significant influence on the twentieth century "linguistic turn" associated with French post-structuralism:

> What is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, anthro-pomorphisms, in short, a sum of human relations which were poet-ically and rhetorically heightened, transferred, and adorned, and after long use seem solid, canonical, and binding to a nation. Truths are illusions about which it has been forgotten that they are illusions, worn-out metaphors without sensory impact, coins which have lost their image and now can be used only as metal, and no longer as coins. We still do not know where the desire for truth originates; for until now we have heard only of the obligation which society, in order to exist, imposes: to be truthful, i.e., to use the customary met-aphors, or in moral terms, the obligation to lie according to an established convention, to lie collectively in a style that is mandatory for everyone. (250)

Here we may perhaps detect shades of Schopenhauerian pessimism infused with a Kantian picture of the "all too human" character of our phenomenological apparatus, beyond which we cannot venture. If there are hints of Schopenhauer in the diagnosis, then perhaps so too in the cure: as Nietzsche advocates an inversion of the Platonic opposition between knowledge and art. To the "intuitive mind", the edifice of knowledge appears as a "prison fortress" from which it can escape through "myth" and "art". The "web of concepts" is "torn apart by art", Nietzsche writes, which "scrambles the metaphors and shifts the boundary-stones of abstraction" and "constantly confuses the categories and cells of the concepts by presenting new transferences, metaphors, and metonyms" showing the apparently organised world of knowledge to be "irregular", "incoherent", "exciting and eternally new, as is the world of dreams (254). However,

Nietzsche's discussion of language in "Truth and Lie" in fact perpetuates many of the oppositions that receive more plausible treatment by other thinkers that we have examined. Rather than drawing on attempts to overcome oversimplistic philosophical dichotomies between reason and experience, logos and mythos, knowledge and art, in many ways Nietzsche adopts a rhetorical strategy of polemically privileging what he considers to be the subordinate term. The distinction between the fiery liquid of experience and the austere architectonics of abstracted concepts echoes the opposition in his themes explored in his 1872 book *The Birth of Tragedy* between the "Apollonian", represented in the plastic arts and standing for appearance, structure, logic, and rationality; and the "Dionysian", conveyed in music, and standing for intoxication, frenzy and the shockingly direct encounter of the world (Nietzsche, 1999). This particular conception of a distinction between the Apollonian and Dionysian may have been influenced by Schlegel or Schelling and the typically romantic characterisation of Dionysus may have its roots in Hamann (see Bowie, 2013a: 65-66). In *The Birth of Tragedy* he suggests that these two elements find their harmonious balance in Greek tragedy. Throughout his works Nietzsche often advocates a compensatory return to the Dionysian. However, Nietzsche overlooks the Hamannian move that language provides the common root and conditions of possibility for both the *a priori* of "pure reason" advocated by rationalists and the *a posteriori* of "pure experience" advocated by empiricists.

Around a decade later Nietzsche's picture of language in these essays from the late 1860s and early 1870s is further developed in a section called "On the 'genius of the species'" in *The Gay Science* (§354), published in 1882. In this section he follows Herder in positing an intimate relationship between language and consciousness. As I

shall argue below, Nietzsche advocates what might be viewed as a kind of reflexive and hermeneutical naturalism – which advances a broadly naturalistic understanding of language, whilst also being cognisant of how naturalising interpretations are linguistically mediated and the social and cultural implications of different kinds of naturalistic metaphors and tropes. While this offers an alternative to reductive forms of naturalism, Nietzsche sometimes overcompensates with too strong an emphasis on the metaphorical aspects of naturalistic accounts. He suggests that consciousness is "really only a net of communication between human beings". Language "serves as a bridge between human beings" in order to organise the world for social action. However, his account departs from Herder's account in its negative characterisation of the social and intersubjective character of language and rationality. Whereas Herder celebrates language's sociality, its ability to creatively organise experience enabling literature and lifeworlds, Nietzsche presents this as a kind of degradation of primordial signal which might enable "higher" more nuanced and holistic genres of expression which are not subordinated to the debased epistemologies, rationales and imperatives of the "herd". Thus he writes that while "all our actions are altogether incomparably personal, unique and infinitely individual", but in making them conscious we make them "common and meaner", "shallow, thin, relatively stupid, general, sign, herd signal" through a "great and thorough corruption, falsification, reduction to superficialities, and generalisation".

This analysis is consistent with his earlier views about "consciousness" as a late and weak form of creaturely expression, and his concerns about the subordination of human life to edifices of knowledge production and rationalisation as opposed to the more unified forms of expression (as exemplified in music), which refract through the whole human being, and project new values, ideals and horizons. It also echoes his

prioritisation of individual experience over "common" language, which is less plausible than Hamann and Herder's conception of how language provides the conditions of possibility for individual experience through its articulation of granular distinctions which enable human thought, rather than simply constraining it. In contrast to Hamann and Herder's affirmation of language, Nietzsche's works exhibit a more generalised suspicion of the "commonness" of many different kinds of human practices, institutions and ideals. This mistrust and suspicion extends to human languages, which he often polemically portrays as repositories of stupidity and cruelty, and downplays the extent to which languages are multivalent and also enable many of the ideas and forms of expression which he admires.

Despite these issues, I would like to focus on two contributions that Nietzsche makes to philosophical debates about the relation between reason, language and experience. Firstly, he starts to unpack the philosophical implications of what a detranscendentalisation, rather than the purification, of human reason might look like: insisting on the physical embodiment, psychological proclivities, unconscious instincts and social, cultural and historical contexts of reasoning beings. His conception of genealogy reflects this interest in the detranscedentalisation of reason. While his proposals for the genealogical inquiry broadly follow from the historical and naturalistic ideals of the eighteenth century linguistic turn, Nietzsche proposes to be much more attentive to the contestation and psychological dimensions implicated in the formation of philosophical concepts. Secondly, Nietzsche proposes that philosophers should be more sensitive to the performative dimensions of philosophical ideas – paying attention to what they *do* and their effects, rather than just the extent to which they help us get closer to the truth. This is what Rorty picks up on in his pragmatist reading of

Nietzsche. In this regard, Nietzsche proposes that philosophers should not just study the composition of linguistic traditions, but may also contribute to them – in particular by proposing new values, ideas, metaphors which articulate new ways of being, new relations and new horizons of experience. Here there are also affinities with the Early German Romantics conception of a philosophical project which enables new forms of aesthetic experience and new kinds of political formations, rather than just focusing on uncovering the truth about our situation. This understanding of how language shapes collective life and social action also anticipates later insights associated with the analytic linguistic turn – including Wittgenstein's suggestion that philosophers should focus on the many different kinds of things that language does (apart from just looking at its designative and truth-bearing capacities, as per Fregean and Russellian logical notation), and Austin's work on the performativity of language.

Nietzsche also offers a more reflexive alternative to scientistic and overly reductive naturalistic readings of the fabric of thought. Some contemporary commentators such as Brian Leiter argue that Nietzsche should be read in the vein of David Hume, advancing a kind of "methodological naturalism" of "type-facts", as opposed to "postmodern" readings associated with Foucault which deny the reality of "deep facts" of human nature and hold that "the claim of science to a special epistemic status is bunk" (Leiter, 2002). However, I would argue that while Nietzsche shares the detranscendentalising and naturalising spirit of the Enlightenment, he holds a more hermeneutically sophisticated form of naturalism than the form that Leiter advocates, that is best considered as an alternative to either scientific naturalistic or postmodern readings. This does not necessarily lead to the epistemological *laissez-faire* that Leiter seems to fear. Nietzsche holds a form of dialectical, hermeneutical naturalism that is much more self-

reflexive and cognisant about the epistemological, cultural and axiomatic underpinnings of scientific knowledge production than a reading which takes "scientific method" or "scientific evidence" as kind of epistemological given.

In this regard I would argue that it is vital not to overlook Nietzsche's scathing critiques of Darwinism and his analyses of the anthropomorphisms, genealogies and value projections of naturalistic projects of all stripes, rather than thinking of his project as modelled on the natural sciences. Nietzsche's philosophy combines and extends the radical critical spirit of Kant's philosophy, the naturalising impulse associated with Enlightenment thought and the "thick" conception of rationality associated with the eighteenth century linguistic turn in order to scrutinise not only human values and institutions, but also to reflexively scrutinise the epistemological assumptions and metaphorical patterns which are braided into the fabric of thought through which he is conducting his inquiry. This is the sense in which he writes (with characteristic modesty): "I myself do not believe that anyone has ever before looked into the world with an equally profound degree of suspicion" (Nietzsche, 1986: §5). To read him as committed to a naive naturalism of "type-facts" undermines his aspiration for a critical and reflexive naturalism. At the same time, it is also vitally important to bear in mind that such a wide-ranging analysis does not automatically mean that he is committed to a kind of "meta-critical" Enlightenment project, whereby genealogical inquiry into the fabric of thought is considered to possess value in itself. On the contrary, I would argue that he retains a pragmatic and performative conception of critique, such that it should contribute to creating the conditions for or providing material for a transvaluation of values rather than "knowledge for knowledge's sake". Following Schlegel and other Early German Romantics, Nietzsche compels us to reflect on the creative function of

philosophy as well as its negative critical function, its musical, expressive, world-projecting affordances, as well as its critical and analytical capabilities.

Bearing this qualification of his naturalism in mind, Nietzsche's conception of genealogy can be read as a means to self-reflexively interrogate the contingent development of the fabric of our thought. Raymond Geuss provides a useful analysis of some of the main features of Nietzsche's conception of genealogy (Geuss, 1999, 2001, 2002). Genealogy, Geuss contends, is "the exact reverse of what we might call 'tracing a pedigree'" (Geuss, 1999: 1). In tracing a pedigree, he says, we would typically aim to legitimise or valorise "some (usually contemporary) person, institution or thing" by tracing it "back through a series of unbroken steps of transmission to a singular origin" (2) which confers some sort of value or authority, such as the divine origin of the sceptre of Agamemnon, or the noble lineage of an aristocratic family. Genealogical inquiries can thus be contrasted with historical accounts which aim to legitimise or valorise their objects of study. Instead they aspire to trace the "historically contingent conjunction" of many different lines of development with "no obvious or natural single stopping place that could be designated 'the origin'" (4). Geuss suggests that a genealogy proceeds by "starting from the present state of … the object of genealogical analysis", and then "works its way backward in time, recounting the episodes of struggle between different wills, each trying to impose its interpretation or meaning", thus "disentangling the separate strands of meaning that have come together in a (contingent) unity in the present" with each strand as a kind of "branching node of a genealogical tree" (14).

In Geuss's account of Nietzsche's work there is a strong sense that genealogy is likely to be deflationary and de-legitimising, by challenging and disenchanting received narratives and highlighting contestation and contingency in concepts which have become fundamental and venerated in the contemporary world. In his 1887 *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche's presentation of the origins of Christian morality is at various times, violent, contradictory and mundane – in contrast to the more exalted narratives of the faith. Guess notes that for Nietzsche a genealogical enquiry is not valuable on account of its accuracy or fidelity in tracing past events per se, but in its ability to intervene, engage, open up new avenues for productive reflection, and to act "in the service of life" (23). However, in Geuss's account this de-stabilising effect is not something that the genealogist is considered to consciously introduce. Rather it is presented as the probable outcome of the patient study of our values, ideals and concepts. Geuss says that Alexander Nehemas is "doubtless right" to suggest that genealogy is not "some particular kind of method or special approach" (17). Instead he suggests that it is a "more plausible and well-supported account of our puzzling history than other available alternatives" (23) or – more concisely put – "simply … history, correctly practised" (17). In Geuss's view a genealogy "does not automatically imply the rejection of what is subjected to genealogical analysis", but rather is "a summons to develop an empirically informed kind of theoretical imagination under the conditions of perceived danger" (Geuss, 2002: 212-213).

Today the Nietzschean conception of genealogy has become widely influential in the humanities and social sciences via Michel Foucault. Michael Forster outlines a brief but useful "genealogy of genealogy", suggesting that the conception of genealogy that Foucault takes from Nietzsche can be traced back to eighteenth and nineteenth century

German philosophy – such as in the work of Hamann, Herder and Hegel (Forster, 2011b, 2011c). Within this philosophical tradition which Nietzsche and, by extension, Foucault draw on, genealogy is held to be "explanatory" rather than "evaluative" (though it may of course stand in the service of evaluation). Forster identifies four characteristics of genealogical enquiry in this tradition. He suggests two "essential" features – "establishing contingency" as opposed to "universality and indispensability", and "establishing historicity" as opposed to "immutability", and "tracing diverse and multiple historical threads" (242-246). He suggests two further "typical" features are "highlighting origins in social oppression" and "highlighting implicit self-contradiction" (246-249). Foucault's account of genealogy has much in common with Geuss's reading of Nietzsche and Forster's understanding of genealogy in eighteenth and nineteenth century German philosophy – including highlighting contingency, contestation, multiple historical threads and episodic development. Foucault inherits from Nietzsche a conception of genealogy as emphasising the "lowly beginnings" of our loftiest concepts (Foucault, 1984: 79), describing their emergence from the contingent "jolts", "surprises", "unsteady victories" and "unpalatable defeats" of history (80). While Foucault describes genealogy as a "meticulous and patiently documentary" empirical undertaking, this is often presented as standing in the service of strategic intervention to challenge and provoke re-evaluation of concepts and practises which have traction in the contemporary world.[11] Nietzsche's conception of genealogy may thus be understood as a way not just to scrutinise the development of the fabric of our thought, but also as a

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[11] There are different assessments of the kinds of interventions that Foucault's conception of genealogy affords. Colin Koopman suggests that Foucault's genealogical method can be used to "make manifest the constitutive and regulative conditions of the present as a material for thought and action that we would need to work on if we are to transform that present" (Koopman, 2013: 18). Manfred Frank comments on the "conservative bent" of genealogical inquiry in Foucault's work – as it aims to undermine the conditions of possibility for the formulation of normative critique in favour of what Foucault characterizes as a "happy positivism" (Frank, 1989: 112).

means to understand how our concepts might be otherwise. Genealogical inquiry in the Nietzschean tradition remains an influential approach for unpicking and rethinking the values, ideals and concepts which play a role in organising social worlds and coordinating social action.

For Nietzsche, genealogical inquiry is first and foremost an exercise in understanding the contingent formations of linguistic terms. The cultivation of a historical sensitivity to the development of language is vital in order to avoid being overly reactive in the use of language in philosophy. In *Beyond Good and Evil* he writes of the "unconscious domination" of philosophical concepts by grammar (Nietzsche, 1966: §20). In *Twilight of the Idols* he famously wrote that "I am afraid we are not yet of God because we still have faith in grammar" (Nietzsche, 2005: 170). In another fragment he writes that "the last thing in metaphysics we'll rid ourselves of" is "that stock which has embodied itself in language and the grammatical categories" (Nietzsche, 2003: 124-125). Nietzsche critiques what he considers reactive responses to language in philosophy, advocating a proactive, creative use of language. Rather than abstracting formal structures and meta-linguistic rules to guide philosophers in their search for truth, he uses a range of metaphors to characterise the gathering of material to inform a philosophy of the future. As well as sharing the Early Romantics views about the importance of music as a model for philosophy, the concept of colour is also a recurring theme in Nietzsche's work. On the one hand he compares genealogical enquiry to a "chemistry of concepts", showing how "the most glorious colours are derived from base, indeed from despised materials" (Nietzsche, 1986: 12). Against the degraded subsumption of "common" language, he extols the hermeneutical sensitivity and analytical clarity of thinkers who can perceive subtle distinctions and gradations in

shade, colour, tone. Hence he writes of genealogy as a project "to collect material, to conceptualize and arrange a vast range of subtle feelings of value and differences of value which are alive, grow, beget and perish" (Nietzsche, 1966: §186). He says that philosophers of the future will perform actions of "many colours" (§215) and says of his own writing that he has "colours, many colours perhaps, many motley caresses and fifty yellows and browns and greens and reds" (§296). He will later write of his *Zarathustra* that "those who have eyes for colours will compare it to a diamond" (Nietzsche, 2005: 234). Describing language in terms of colour stands in contrast to philosophical accounts which focus on distilling a narrow range of fundamental analytical operations with which to reason about the world. Rather than focusing on language's capacity to designate objects and convey information, this comparison serves to highlight the fact that language can articulate subtle gradations of subjective perception as well as picking out aspects of the world. Nietzsche suggests that these fine gradations – which can be obtained through genealogical inquiry – can help to broaden the expressive repertoire of philosophers of the future.

This creative conception of philosophy is another point of convergence between Nietzsche and the Early German Romantics, who (as we saw above) are interested in bringing back the musicality, expressive wealth and affective dimensions of language which are subordinated in "thin" conceptions of rationality that we examined in chapter two. Following Hamann and Herder, these thinkers advance a more holistic conception of the philosopher as an embodied creature of memories, dreams and instincts – and argue that linguistically mediated rationality is better served by the full expressive capacity of embodied human creatures, rather than by attempts to purify reason or focus more narrowly on language's essential "conceptual content". They also share the

aspiration to put this thicker conception of rationality to work in the service of philosophical interventions to reshape the fabric of thought. Nietzsche suggests that philosophical reflection on language may not only facilitate more critical and reflexive use of language in philosophy, but also that in the longer term philosophers can propose "new names", which may in the longer term become "new things" (Nietzsche, 1974: §58). Throughout his texts, Nietzsche presents philosophers as "experimenters" who face the task of creating new values. In his own work he proposes ways that language may serve as the basis for different forms of social organisation, such as overcoming what he describes as "herd" values and creating new narratives and metaphors to promote values such as independence, self- overcoming, nobility, and so on. We may see many of his most famous motifs in this light – such as his ideas of the "overman" and the "will to power". Against the Darwinist narratives which characterise life as a fight for survival, he proposes an alternative conception of the "will to life" which would emphasise the overflowing abundance of creation. His *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* can be read as an attempt to create new fables, metaphors, images which embody new "life-affirming" values.

In drawing attention to these aspirations of Nietzsche's thought my purpose is not to draw attention to the kinds of interventions he made and values he articulated– which were questionable regarding both his intentions and his success. Rather I would like to highlight how in addition to a thicker conception of linguistically mediated reason, Nietzsche had a correspondingly thicker conception of the different modes and registers of philosophy. Rather than seeking to purify reason in support of a conception of philosophy as a form of calculation (as per chapter two), Nietzsche sought to contribute to the enrichment of thought in the service of philosophy as a form of creative,

performative intervention into the fabric of our thought. Rorty's reading of Nietzsche reinforces this reading. He proposed that through genealogical inquiry we can highlight the contingency, contestation and manifold constellation of divergent meanings implicated in the development of our thought in order to open up space for critical reflection. Nietzsche's works exhibit a deep appreciation for how we are shaped by the fabric of thought, combined with an interest in reformulating the classical philosophical values of self-knowledge and virtue in light of a picture of linguistically mediated reason that has strong affinities with those that I have examined in the works of Hamann, Herder and the Early German Romantics.

Before concluding this chapter, there is one final issue that I will address: that of Nietzsche's perspectivism, how this relates to his views about language, and the extent to which his views overlap with or differ from other thinkers that we have looked at – including those of Hamann and Herder. It is first worth noting that while Nietzsche's perspectivism is one of the most renowned elements of his philosophy, it is also one of the most contested. There are only a few places in his corpus in which he explicitly states his views on this topic, and fewer still in his published works. For example, in his *Genealogy of Morality* he writes the following:

> From now on, my philosophical colleagues, let us be more wary of the dangerous old conceptual fairy-tale which has set up a 'pure, will-less, painless, timeless, subject of knowledge', let us be wary of the tentacles of such contradictory concepts as 'pure reason', 'absolute spirituality', 'knowledge as such': – here we are asked to think an eye which cannot be thought at all, an eye turned in no direction at all, an eye where the active and interpretative powers are to be suppressed, absent, but through which seeing still becomes a seeing-something, so it is an absurdity and non-concept of eye that is demanded. There is only a perspectival seeing, only a

perspectival 'knowing'; the more affects we are able to put into words about a thing, the more eyes, various eyes we are able to use for the same thing, the more complete will be our 'concept' of the thing, our 'objectivity'. But to eliminate the will completely and turn off all the emotions without exception, assuming we could: well? would that not mean to castrate the intellect? … (Nietzsche, 2007: 87).

Interpretations of Nietzsche's perspectivism vary widely, including readings which portray him as committed to various forms of relativism, anti-foundationalism, post-structuralism, pragmatism and naturalism (see, e.g., Schacht, 1985: 52-117; Clark, 1991: 127-158; Leiter, 2002: 269-279; Gemes, 2013). Rather than giving a detailed hermeneutical exposition of Nietzsche's views on the basis of the available textual evidence or an in depth examination of the many different competing interpretations of his claims, I shall presently focus on giving an outline of the different kinds of claims that Nietzsche's perspectivism could be interpreted to commit him to in relation to his claims about language, and the implications that these have for the arguments associated with the legacy of the German linguistic turn discussed in this thesis so far.

I will structure discussion of these issues by examining the following claims in turn:

(A) Languages engender different perspectives of the world;

(B) We cannot "step outside" of the different perspectives of the world engendered in language;

(C) We cannot adjudicate between different perspectives engendered in language;

(D) Any perspective engendered in language is as good as any other;

(E) Different perspectives of the world engendered in language are incommensurable;

(F) Claims can only ever be evaluated in relation to a particular perspective engendered in language.

As per the discussion of the "philosophical terrain" in the introduction to this thesis, these claims might be used to articulate a multidimensional space to explore different arguments about language, perspectivism and relativism. This can serve as a heuristic guide to situate different thinkers in relation to, based on our interpretation of their probable acceptance or rejection of the various claims.

Of these claims, (A) is probably the least controversial – although there are, of course, stronger and weaker versions of this claim. Weaker versions of this claim might simply state that different languages portray the world in different ways: some languages attach genders to nouns, whereas others do not; some words convey a specific sense or sentiment which is hard to translate into other languages (such as the Dutch adjective "gezellig" or the German modal particle "doch"); there are different vocabularies to articulate different social roles (whether in the setting of a family, a school or an organisation) or to draw attention to different features of the world (such as vocabularies for making distinctions between different colours or meteorological conditions). Weaker versions of (A) state that different languages draw our attention to certain kinds of things in the world, or support different ways of seeing the world.

Stronger versions of (A) might claim that languages not only vary in terms of their *representation* of different pre-existing features of the world but *articulating* different features of the world, and *creating the conditions of possibility* for experiencing the world in different ways. Riffing on Ian Hacking's reading of the HHH tradition (examined in chapter five), here we might consider this in terms of Nelson Goodman's concept of "world-versions" – such that, as Hacking puts it, "to [language] we owe the

existences and structures that populate our world-versions" (Hacking, 2002: 139). Thus we might distinguish between:

> (A1) Languages engender different perspectives of the world – by representing different features of it in different ways;
> (A2) Languages engender different perspectives of the world – by articulating different world-versions.

In my view Nietzsche, Hamann and Herder make stronger claims than (A1), and are generally much closer to (A2). This is particularly clear in Nietzsche's claim above that in the long run "new names" may lead to "new things" (Nietzsche, 1974: §58). Might we even go further, and following Goodman's analysis in his *Ways of Worldmaking* (Goodman, 1978) consider an even stronger version of the claim, such as the following?

> (A3) Languages articulate different worlds.

This is a point at which views about the plausibility of (A) may begin to diverge more widely. While (A1) type claims are arguably uncontroversial to the point of triviality, and (A2) type claims might be considered to resonate with debates in analytic philosophy about different kinds of "conceptual schemes" (including in the work of Quine, Rorty and Davidson), type (A3) claims are likely to elicit further questions about what we mean by "world", what it means to articulate one, and – following discussions of Goodman's work – what it could mean for there to be many different worlds, as opposed to world-versions. The transition from (A2) and (A3) arguably marks the transition from questions about how language gives shape to how we experience and

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understand the world, to broader philosophical debates about realism and relativism, knowledge and truth.

What is at issue here is how to interpret claims that languages *create* worlds – in consideration of not just the designative and information encoding but also the world-articulating capacities of languages. While Kant's transcendental analytic aims to account for the phenomenological characteristics and enduring categories of experience which give form to the world for everyone (regardless of where, when and in which culture they live), Hamann and Herder's linguistic metacritiques argue that such an account cannot be given without reference to the contingent formations of natural languages. In relation to these linguistically articulated world-versions we might ask: is that all there is? Can we meaningfully or intelligibly ask about the world outside these linguistic world-versions? This brings us to the claim (B):

(B) We cannot "step outside" of the different perspectives on the world engendered in language.

Here again we can distinguish between stronger and weaker claims of this claim. At its weakest, this claim might be considered to be trivially true: we always already see the world from our perspective, we do not see things from a "non-perspective". This might be the basis for a somewhat deflationary (not untrue, but perhaps disappointingly inconsequential) interpretation of Nietzsche's quote above – that we are always situated, in relation to knowledge as well as in relation to optics. We do not automatically possess a God's eye view – that which Thomas Nagel calls a "view from nowhere". Versions of (B) become stronger as we move from claims about our situation to broader claims about knowledge and reality – such as the following:

(B1) We cannot have access to any world outside of the perspectives engendered in language;

(B2) There is no "real" world outside of the perspectives engendered in language.

It seems to me that Nietzsche expresses a range of different and conflicting views in relation to each of these claims in different works and at different phases of his philosophical life. In relation to (B1) we can – again – distinguish between stronger and weaker claims. In "Truth and Lie" Nietzsche advocates what I have argued above is a pre-critical conception of experience which is, *qua* philosophical argument, unconvincing to the point of caricature – contrasting the Apollonian "lies" of linguistic worlds which abstract from experience, with the Dionysian "truth" of raw, primal, unmediated experience in a way which represents a step backwards from the insights of Kant's transcendental analytic. In other later works (such as the *Gay Science*) Nietzsche has a more compelling historical and naturalistic sketch of how language intersubjectively articulates social worlds, evolving in response to the choices and circumstances of a linguistic community. In this regard I don't think Nietzsche commits himself to the stronger versions of (B) such that we cannot access anything outside of our linguistic world versions. While some might consider passages such as "How the 'Real World' Finally Became a Fable" – to commit Nietzsche to (B2) type claims, I would argue that many of these can be read in terms of a rejection of metaphysical dualism (such that if we let go of the idea of an underlying metaphysical reality, then the world around us is no longer merely "apparent"). This is supported by his assertions that there is but "one earth" and "one sun" (Nietzsche, 2007: 4).

As discussed above, Hamann and Herder also discuss not only how language provides the conditions of possibility for experience (in their linguistic reinterpretations

of Kant's transcendental analytic), but also how language evolves in response to experience – thus implicitly rejecting the view that linguistic world-versions exhaust our experience of the world, and leaving room for encounters with a world outside of them. Andrew Bowie comments that "Hamann's own counter to relativism is, of course, the God whose one creation is reflected in the diversity of natural languages" – and that a "regulative idea" of objectivity can fulfil an analogous function instead of Hamann's God (Bowie, 2003: 49-50). As I shall argue in the following chapter, neither Heidegger and Gadamer reject the idea of a world outside or apart from our linguistic world-versions. Furthermore, in my view none of these thinkers are committed to the idea that languages articulate worlds (A3) in the sense that we cannot meaningfully speak of a "world" outside of our linguistic world-versions, or that we must only speak of a "world" in relation to our linguistic world-versions. That said, I think there is a case for characterizing these linguistic world-versions as "worlds" in the broader sense that they profoundly shape the structure of our experience, our understanding of our surroundings and our situation and the ways in which we reason and relate to each other as social beings. Whilst these linguistically mediated worlds don't exhaust our experience, this does not necessarily entail that there are straightforward non-linguistic or extra-linguistic means of comparing claims, values or "ways of seeing" engendered in these worlds.

This brings us onto claim (C):

(C) We cannot adjudicate between different perspectives engendered in language.

Nietzsche certainly does not suggest that we have no means to choose between different perspectives – indeed, it is a central part of his "new philosophy" to favour hierarchy and rank-order, rather than a "levelling" of perspectives as per type (E) claims that, e.g. all perspectives are equal which might be considered a paradigmatic claim of cultural relativism. In the *Gay Science*, for example, he states that it is "childish" to infer that "no morality is binding" from the fact that there is a plurality of different moral perspectives (Nietzsche, 1974: §345). Thus we can reasonably assume that Nietzsche would reject the following version of claim (C):

(C1) It is not possible to adjudicate between different perspectives engendered in language.

The question thus becomes not *whether* we can adjudicate between different perspectives, but *how* we can and should do so. Depending on our response to (B) type claims about access to that beyond perspectives, we can examine (C) type claims not just in terms of *de facto* preferences or orderings of perspectives, but in terms of objective criteria. Here we might further distinguish between different types of objective criteria. Returning for a moment to Goodman's vocabulary – Goodman claims that acknowledging a plurality of different world-versions does not mean that we must abandon talk of "rightness" (or, as he puts it, "rightness of rendering") in relation to these world versions. Critics of Goodman such as Harry Siegel have suggested that how we read Goodman's proposals about rightness depends on whether he is suggesting that there are "version-neutral" criteria of rightness, or whether criteria of rightness are "version bound" (Siegel, 1987: 152-153). Thus we might consider the following formulation of (C):

(C2) We have no external, perspective-neutral means to adjudicate between different perspectives engendered in language.

On this point there are significant divergences between different "schools" of interpreting (or making use of) Nietzsche's works. While interpreters such as Leiter suggest that Nietzsche is committed to a methodological naturalism of "type facts", which might be considered to provide objective criteria for distinguishing between the claims of different linguistic world-versions, in the discussion above I have suggested above why I don't believe such a reading is plausible: I argue that Nietzsche remains too critical of the anthropocentric and axiomatic baggage of scientific claims to adopt these alone as the basis for objective criteria between different perspectives. It is also doubtful that he would embrace "post-modern" readings which would see him committed to the view such as (D) that:

(D) Any perspective engendered in language is as good as any other.

Throughout his work he returns to the same set of values (e.g. self-overcoming, self-creation, abundance, affirmation), but his commitment to these values is often expressed in terms of the legislating judgements of an elite group of "philosophers of the future" rather than a set of universal rules or principles to adjudicate between competing claims. On the one hand we might follow Heidegger in reading this dimension of Nietzsche's work in terms of a metaphysics of power (largely advanced in his unpublished works and perhaps inspired by his early readings of Schopenhauer). On the other hand, we might follow deflationary readings which see him as less committed to an overarching monism of power – such as Robert C. Solomon's interpretation of the will to power as an "elaborate thought experiment" (Solomon, 2006: 23). In either case, from

Nietzsche's works it is not clear how the will to power would provide us with compelling perspective-neutral criteria to adjudicate between different perspectives engendered in language. This is in some ways unsurprising given Nietzsche's critical views about justification, knowledge and epistemology. As Ken Gemes puts it, "there are more general reasons to think that Nietzsche was not particularly concerned with such things as a theory of truth or the metaphysics of facts" (Gemes, 2013: 558). This does not mean that by adopting something like Nietzsche's picture of language and perspectivism we must necessarily rule out the possibility of there being perspective-neutral criteria – simply that this is not something that it appears that he was particularly focused on providing an account of in his philosophical works.

Where does this leave us with regards to the two final claims?

(E) Different perspectives of the world engendered in language are incommensurable;

(F) Claims can only ever be evaluated in relation to a particular perspective engendered in language.

Regarding (E) Maudemarie Clark argues that Nietzsche's perspectivism is not incompatible with the view that "all human perspectives are commensurable", but that there is not much textual evidence either way, perhaps as "Nietzsche may not have been very interested in the question" (Clark, 1991: 143-144). Type (F) claims are at the heart of philosophical debates about relativism. Following Maria Baghramian's work on the varieties of relativism, we might distinguish between different kinds of relativism about truth, rationality, knowledge, concepts, interpretation and morality (Baghramian, 2004). The most pertinent of these in the present context is rationality – thus we might examine the following version of claim (F):

(F1) Rationality can only be understood in relation to a particular perspective engendered in

language.

Again – this is not an issue that Nietzsche appears to devoted significant attention to, but it is nonetheless crucial for evaluating the contemporary relevance and plausibility of his views on language and perspectivism. Developing the line of inquiry above in relation to Goodman's work we might ask whether rationality should be understood as bound to particular linguistically articulated perspectives, or whether we can consider there to be perspective-neutral structures of rationality. These questions of whether rationality – (F1) – and ways of adjudicating between perspectives – (C2) – are perspective-bound, perspective-neutral or extra-perspectival are raised in relation to debates between Gadamer and Habermas, which I shall discuss further in the following two chapters.

7. Appropriating Language: Heidegger and Gadamer

"Language always presupposes a common world" (Gadamer, 2004: 407)

In this chapter I look at how insights from the eighteenth century German linguistic turn are taken up by Heidegger and Gadamer in order to elaborate a more detailed view about how human beings simultaneously shape and are shaped by linguistically mediated traditions. Heidegger elaborates a model for how linguistic innovation is possible through the mutual shaping of language and *Dasein*, as in the paradigmatic case of poetic language. Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics indicates the fundamental role of historically situated linguistic tradition in shaping our horizons, while also suggesting that this tradition is open to reconfiguration and that we cannot help but make this tradition our own.

Heidegger on the Appropriation of Language

In this section I will highlight Heidegger's contributions to rethinking the relationship between reason, language and experience – drawing on insights from the eighteenth century German linguistic turn. In particular, I shall focus on Heidegger's account of how language plays a role in intersubjectively articulating the lived environments of embodied beings, as well as how linguistic innovation takes place at

the intersection between language and experience, exemplified by the poetic reconfiguration of webs of language.

Before moving onto looking to these aspects of his work in more detail, I will briefly comment on what it means to read his works philosophically in light of ongoing revelations about his life and politics. The recently published "black notebooks" highlight the extent of his commitments to National Socialism and his anti-Semitism (see, e.g. Gordon, 2014; Fried, 2014; Rothman, 2014; Rée, 2014). The reprehensibility of Heidegger's association with Nazism along with his anti-Semitic comments cannot be ignored or bracketed by contemporary interpretations of his thought. As Habermas comments this extends not only to Heidegger's "entanglement" with National Socialism, but also his "retouchings and manipulations, his refusal publicly to detach himself from the regime to which he had publicly adhered" (Dreyfus & Hall, 1992: 201). As Tom Rockmore writes, "to fail to take [Heidegger's] Nazism into account in the interpretation of his philosophical and 'post-philosophical' thought" is to "endeavour to be more friendly to Heidegger than to the truth" (Rockmore, 1997: 301). At the same time, it is hard to see how we might "abandon Heidegger" entirely in making sense of twentieth century European philosophical thought, as some commentators have called for (Fuchs, 2015). Nor is it plausible – I would argue – given the nature and breadth of his work, to draw a clear and sharp line between his life and his thought.

Given the absence of a neat hermeneutical solution to this dilemma, contemporary readers of Heidegger are left with few options than to read him critically, keeping in mind both the gravity and inexcusability of his actions (both during and after the

Second World War) at the same time as trying to advance a sufficiently broad and empathetic hermeneutical perspective to understand and evaluate the philosophical import and implications of his work. The fact that we may find the views or actions of other philosophers abhorrent – whether, for example, in their support for slavery, racism, sexism, imperialism or totalitarianism – does not in my view justify a total hermeneutical suspension of the objects of our misgivings for the sake of a "purely philosophical" reading. On the contrary – I would argue that Plato's views on slavery, Kant's views on race and Nietzsche's views on women are not *a priori* "irrelevant" to philosophical interpretations of their work. This does not preclude the possibility of more focused "pictures" of different aspects of their philosophical views, which may yet inform contemporary philosophical debate.

Heidegger's 1927 magnum opus *Being and Time* may be read as an attempt to provide a post-metaphysical account of the "question of the meaning of *being*" partly by means of an innovative philosophical vocabulary to re-narrate and re-characterise the situation in which we find ourselves as finite human creatures imperfectly negotiating our environments. Heidegger's philosophical vocabulary – although unfamiliar-sounding and perhaps initially defamiliarising in relation to the traditional language of European metaphysics – is in fact intended to *refamiliarise* his readers with our ordinary lived phenomenological worlds which in his view have remained inadequately accounted for in Western philosophy. Against the more or less self-transparent, autonomous and abstracted subjects of philosophy from Descartes to Kant to Husserl, Heidegger instead proposes his conception of living, embodied, mortal *Dasein.* The word *Dasein* (literally: "there-being") is used by Heidegger to characterise how human beings experience and find themselves in the world without recourse to metaphysical or

philosophical accounts which focus on the "subject". While philosophical accounts in the European philosophical tradition focus on certain very artificial conceptions of human subjects knowing and relating to the world as disembodied and disengaged entities focusing on a very limited repertoire of cognitive operations (such as designating things, exchanging information, and attempting to obtain true beliefs about the world), Heidegger instead proposes that *Dasein* is "thrown" into a lived world (or environment) of moods and things which appear and recede as we negotiate the situations in which we find ourselves. In his work he tries to account for the manifold ways in which we ordinarily find ourselves in the world, and to contribute to a more compelling philosophical account of how we actually relate to our environments.

Heidegger's work combines an interest in the universal philosophical ambitions of Aristotle, Kant and Husserl; the theological and existential gravity of Duns Scotus and Søren Kierkegaard; and the literary worlds of Friedrich Hölderin and Stefan George. Against the comparatively austere and conceptual worlds projected by Kant or Husserl, Heidegger's prose paints pictures of anxiety and uncertainty, provisional and partial knowledge, of things concealed and unconcealed, phenomenologically invisible and then coming to be "present-to-hand" in lived situations. This sentiment is exemplified in a 1919 talk in which he describes "lectern-seeing". Heidegger says that in looking at a lectern he sees not "brown intersecting surfaces" but rather "the lectern at a single stroke" (Safranski, 1999: 94-95). The lectern is thus not something which we consciously perceive as sense-data, but rather "something [that] presents itself … from an immediate environment". In our encounter with it, the lectern is – as Heidegger puts it – "worlding", in that it plays a role in the composition and projection of a world, a lived environment. In his lectures and work in the 1920s before the publication of *Being*

and Time, he refers to this as the "hermeneutics of facticity", and new mode of philosophically reading, interpreting and making sense of our lived, concrete, being-in-the-world. This project will later be described as his "existential analytic", in contrast with Kant's "transcendental analytic". Indeed, later in 1927 – the same year that he published *Being and Time* – Heidegger gave a lecture course proposing a "phenomenological interpretation" of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (Heidegger, 1997).

In *Being and Time* Heidegger suggests that language plays an important role in the shared or public constitution of the worlds of *Dasein*. He writes that "communication" should be "understood in a sense which is ontologically broad", as a kind of *co-articulation of being* rather than as the "conveying of experiences, such as opinions or wishes, from the interior of one subject into the interior of another" (Heidegger, 1962: 205). In this sense, Heidegger follows the trajectory charted out by Ian Hacking from conceiving of language exclusively or predominantly as a means of designating private mental representations to considering it as inter-subjectively articulating shared worlds (Hacking, 2002). In a claim which has an affinity with Wittgenstein's comments about one-sided depictions of language in his *Philosophical Investigations*, Heidegger also suggests the inadequacies of "attempts to grasp 'the essence of language'" in terms of concepts like expression, assertion, making-known, or the "patterning" of life (206). Instead, Heidegger suggests that language must be understood in terms of and in intimate connection with the existential analytic of Dasein. Heidegger traces the over-emphasis on the propositional or assertoric character of language back to ancient Greek conceptions of *logos* in terms of the logic and grammar of the "ontology of the present-

at-hand" (209). The assertoric aspects of language are, Heidegger argues, "derivative" (§33).

In contrast to one-sided philosophical accounts of language which focus on a limited range of its capacities (such as a limited range of logical operators, information encoding functions and canonical concepts) Heidegger argues for the necessity of a broader and "ontologically more primordial" account of the role of language in the phenomenological structuring of the being-in-the-world of Dasein (210). To this end he proposes that language "has its roots in the existential constitution of Dasein's disclosedness", and that "the existential- ontological foundation of language is discourse or talk" (204). Discourse is the "way in which we articulate 'significantly' the intelligibility of Being-in-the-world" (204). In this sense, for Heidegger, discourse might be understood as part of the fabric of the shared lifeworlds of Dasein. His concept of "idle talk" (*Gerede*) denotes language in which "understanding and interpretation already lie in what has thus been expressed" (211). It entails through the use of phrases and expressions which are characterised by the "obviousness and self-assurance of the average ways in which things have been interpreted", facilitating an "ever-increasing groundlessness" of Dasein.

While language thus features in his account of the constitution of the worlds of Dasein in *Being and Time*, Heidegger later wrote that a series of 1934 lectures on "logic" (in the Greek sense of *logos*, language) played a pivotal role in developing his thoughts around a theme that was to occupy a much more central place in his works over the coming decades, as he for the first time "dared discuss in a class the question of language" (Heidegger, 2009: xi). This marks the beginning of a period in which he will

make some of his renowned and apparently more cryptic claims about language – such as "language speaks us" and "language is the house of being". In the 1934 lectures, he says that he wishes to embark upon the "necessary task of a shaking up of logic" (Heidegger, 2009: 6). In a move which follows in the footsteps of Hamann and Herder's metacritical readings of Kant, Heidegger argues against traditional narrow conceptions of logic in favour of a broader understanding of the "science of the formal fundamental structures and rule of thinking". Like Hamann and Herder, he argues that language is central to this enquiry. Heidegger contends that "philosophy originates only out of a sufficient understanding of language" (13). Echoing Hamann and Herder, Heidegger also makes a distinction between conceptions of language as living and dead. He contrasts the "bones" of language in a dictionary with the living sites "where [language] happens", namely "among human beings" (21-22). Similarly, he opposes the scientific study of language as an ossified object (e.g. in linguistics or analytic philosophy), with coming to an understanding of the living language of Dasein *in* language and *through* language. Hence the logic of language is not the "cheap superiority" of "annoying formulas" (7) or the "dried up collection of eternal laws of thought" (7-8), but that which fundamentally fabricates (composing and giving form to) the social and historical lifeworlds of living Dasein. Language plays a central role in the composition of intersubjective worlds of lived thought and experience of embodied, mortal beings.

Echoing Herder and Nietzsche's views on the relationship between language and consciousness, Heidegger argues that there is an intimate connection between language and what it means to be human. We cannot understand one without understanding the other. Hence, "language is only insofar as the human being is" (139). To attempt to study language apart from the lives of living, embodied mortal beings is to miss a vital

part of the picture – a similar point to Hamann's critique of Michaelis's prize-winning essay of 1759. Hence, as Heidegger puts it in his lectures, language must be understood "as the ruling of the world-forming and preserving center of the historical Dasein of the Volk" (140). "The world is not an idea of theoretical reason", Heidegger writes, "but the world announces itself in the lore [*Kunde*] of historical being", which "happens in the primal-event of language" (140). In order to understand the logic of language, we must not let it be "misused and levelled, distorted, and forced into a means of communication" (141). Instead, at the very conclusion of his lectures, he ends with note that distinctly echoes Hamann, Herder, the Early German Romantics and Nietzsche's views about the paradigmatic character of poetic language:

> The essence of language essences where it happens as world-forming power, that is, where it in advance preforms and brings into jointure the being of beings. The original language is the language of poetry. (141)

In making this claim Heidegger has a very particular kind of primal, originary, world-disclosing poetry in mind. "True poetry", he writes, "is the language of that being that was forespoken to us a long time ago already and that we have never caught up with" (141-142). Poetry is the language of the primordial past or projecting into the future, and the "true" poet "is never contemporary". Here Heidegger emphasises the importance of learning to speak *authentically* (echoing comments in *Being and Time*), as well as the *traditionary* dimension of language (which will later become central for Gadamer). Michael Inwood highlights the distinction between *Poesie* and *Dichtung* in Heidegger's works – with the former indicating poetry in a narrow sense, and the latter indicating all forms of creative language (Inwood, 1999). Like Hamann, Heidegger suggests that poetry (*Poesie*) in the narrow sense is the paradigmatic form of language

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– but also that all authentic language can be considered poetry (*Dichtung*) in the broad sense, which "brings the entity as an entity into the open", "opens up beings" and "makes world and history possible" (169-170). Here there are also parallels with Herder's analysis of the relationship between language and experience – in particular the way in which language articulates aspects of the world to be experienced in a particular way. Taylor calls this dimension of language which "can open us to new possibilities" the "constitutive-expressive" – and gives the example of terms which facilitate the experience of different kinds of moods like "cool", or new kinds of social relations such as "CEO" (Taylor, 2016).

Heidegger's views on language are further developed in notes for a graduate seminar series in 1939 published as "On the Essence of Language" which give an extended interpretation, analysis and response to Herder's views on the origins of language (Heidegger, 2004). In these notes he also explicitly connects his discussion of language with the work of "the three Hs" – namely Hamann, Herder, Humboldt (31), and alludes to Hamann's works and thought, including his claim that "reason is language, logos" (43). He raises the tension between seeing human beings as "self-forming" and their formation and constitution within the social and historical fabric of language – the tension between shaping and being shaped by language. When we do shape language, he asks whether this can be considered part of a broader historical constellation, or whether it has the "character of a decision" (69). Again, he reiterates the living character of language and its relation to Dasein, discussing the roles of sounding and silence, hearing and hearkening. We can read these notes as Heidegger's attempt at a phenomenological reinterpretation of Herder's essay on the origin of language, akin to his earlier phenomenological reading of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. Heidegger also

implicitly follows Hamann in seeing language as the origin of reason's misunderstanding with itself.

In a section called "Language – Freedom – Word" – which I take to be critical for the question of shaping and being shaped by language – he develops his views about how linguistic innovation is possible. Alluding to the distinction between "negative and positive freedom", Heidegger writes that "freedom from … leads at most to the destruction of the living being". Instead, he argues, we should think of freedom in terms of "freedom for", in terms of openness, receptivity and appropriation. This account has parallels with Hamann's metacritique of Kant's "thin" conception of rationality, whereby "liberation" from tradition, experience and language actually lead significant constraint of expressive repertoire. The act of making the case for a "thin" idealised pure rationality is itself enabled through "thick" linguistically mediated rationality. Hamann, Herder, the Early German Romantics and Heidegger all advance a model of agency in shaping language that is exemplified by poetry. Rather than a freedom *from* linguistic tradition, poetry involves a literacy *with* linguistic tradition such that an attentiveness to the affordances of linguistic mediation – for example through an intimacy with the genesis of terms, translation, and the application of language – enables the adept language user to reconfigure it, to craft it, to *shape* the living practices and institutions of linguistically mediated being. In order to do this, it is not enough to follow dictionaries, philological accounts and "dead" words on the page. We must develop an awareness of language as an act, as a craft, of language as a living fabric entangled and interwoven with the evolving environment in and through which human beings are. In Heidegger's works this conception of linguistic innovation in terms of the

reconfiguration of a pre-existing fabric of meanings exists in dialectical tension alongside the idea that languages "speaks us".

This helps us to make sense of why poetic language becomes such an important feature of Heidegger's later works. His later works develop this distinction between language as a living process which is constantly being rearticulated, and language as a static object to be classified and formalised that echoes Hamann and Herder's distinction between living and dead language. Thus Heidegger writes critically in his 1959 essay collection *On the Way to Language* of attempts to come to an understanding of language through the "gathering information about a language" (as in linguistics or the scientific study of language), or through the development of a "super-language" through "metalinguistics" (as in analytic philosophy). However, while the distinction between language as a process and language as an object is useful in drawing attention to how he views the relationship between language and experience, and how authentic language (as *Dichtung*) is constantly being rearticulated, his speculative claims about language as an object are often untenable. For example, he writes:

> Metalinguistics is the metaphysics of the thoroughgoing technicalisation of all languages into the
> sole operative instrument of interplanetary information. Metalanguage and sputnik, metalinguistics
> and rocketry are the Same. (Heidegger: 1971: 58)

This resonates with Heidegger's speculative ("strongly essentialistic", as Habermas puts it) accounts of modern technology, scientific rationality and the mechanisation of human reason which he characterises as "machination" (*Machenschaft*). In this vein he writes of the "modern mind, whose ideas about everything are punched out in the die presses of technical-scientific calculation" and of the "uniformly calculated availability

of the whole earth" (91, 105). Thomas Sheehan's recent reinterpretation of Heidegger's philosophy calls him out on this point – suggesting that Heidegger's "deep history" (as in the above example connecting metalinguistics and rocketry) is actually a kind of highly idealised philosophical "meta-history" which is as "resolutely uncontaminated" by what actually happens as the Christian narrative of original sin (Sheehan, 2014: 286-288). While he goes too far in his conclusions, the distinction between looking at language as a living process embedded into the environments and practices of embodied beings and looking at language in terms of the classification and formalisation of its features is a useful one for understanding Heidegger's views on this topic. To focus on the latter at the expense of the former is to put the cart before the horse. And to understand the horse that gives language its living being, we must turn back to Heidegger's account of poetic language.

Heidegger proposes to look at models for coming to an awareness of language *as* language and *in* language in the genre of poetry – through examining the experiences of language in the works of poets such as Stefan George. Comparing language to a "web of relations" he suggests that rather than "removing it" to obtain clarity on human reason and understanding, we should "loosen" the web of language which so often "compresses, narrows, and obstructs the straight clear view inside its mesh" in order to obtain a view of the "open togetherness" of the relationships between its elements (113). Heidegger alludes to Humboldt's view that "language must be regarded not as a dead product of the past but as a living creation" (117). He highlights the latter's view of what we might call an "appropriational" model of shaping language such that "the old shell is filled with new meaning", "old coinage conveys something different" and "old laws of syntax are used to hint at a different graduated sequence of ideas" as

exemplified in literature, and "especially [in] poetry and philosophy" (136). As Sheehan comments, Heidegger's conception of *Ereignis* (appropriation) is not meant to signal that human beings "take ownership" or "take command", but is rather meant to signal a process of bringing things "into their own" – such that appropriation can be seen as the "opening of the clearing" (Sheehan, 2014: 233-234). This is not a vision in which human beings exercise mastery and control of language, but rather one in language can be reconfigured through a process of mutual rearticulation, of *Dasein* becoming receptive to the attunement between language and experience.

This appropriational model of the creativity of poetic language is the key to understanding some of Heidegger's views on language which would otherwise look *prima facie* implausible (though many aspects of his views about language do remain questionable even in light of this interpretation, as I shall explore further below). For example, his suggestion that "man acts as though *he* were the shaper and master of language, while in fact *language* remains the master of man" (Heidegger, 1975: 144). With the appropriational model, Heidegger paints a picture whereby poetic creativity is understood as a form of "ever more painstaking" *listening* – both to language, and to being (214). Rather than the Platonic model of the philosopher with an impression or recollection of a higher, ideal realm imposing form onto stubborn material, Heidegger thinks that poetic language exemplifies the *mutual articulation,* the *mutual shaping* of language and Dasein. The poet becomes receptive to the affordances of language as a living movement, and receptive to the environmental world of *Dasein*, and loosens the web of language to open up space to move away from the deployment of ready-made fragments of "idle talk" or chatter which is unreceptive to being, and towards new translations and reconfigurations in the web of language. The poet exemplifies the

immersion into the movements of being and tradition. For Heidegger, self-conscious, autonomous agency is a myth of modern liberal culture, and freedom is rather to be obtained by softening and loosening the familiar formations and configurations of discourse and through freely working with pre-given material. Like Hamann, Herder and Nietzsche, Heidegger suggests that the mutual shaping that happens in poetry is paradigmatic for languages more generally. Hence, he writes "everyday language is a forgotten and therefore used-up poem, from which there hardly resounds a call any longer" (205).

Is this "appropriational" reading of Heidegger's notion that "language speaks us" (such that we are to understand the sense in which "we are spoken" in terms of a "co-shaping") to be understood as simply giving a more plausible philosophical account of language, or does it also have a normative dimension such that Heidegger compels us to listen to tradition, to heed our cultural inheritance? Is his detranscendentalising, phenomenological account of rationality to be understood as contributing to a more plausible and insightful philosophical account of reason and the constitution of human thought, or does he in effect advocating a form of chauvinism in which we should render ourselves receptive to the imperatives of cultural tradition? Certainly in his lectures from the 1930s, he does not just talk in the abstract of any people, but specifically of the "we" of the German *Volk*. Furthermore, his accounts of language from this period are interspersed with critiques of the inauthentic universalising aspirations of liberal modernity, as contrasted with the immersion in authentic German cultural tradition. Does Heidegger's project leave room for the composition of a global polis through the interweaving of different cultural traditions? Or does he essentially

advocate for a reactionary return to "authentic" cultural formations, a fragmentation of the world into irreconcilable and unbridgeable local environments?

There certainly does seem to be at least an implicit normative dimension in his discussion of language in terms of "building" and "dwelling". He suggests that poetry is the "authentic gauging of the dimension of dwelling", as the "primal form of building". In poetry we "take measure" of being and our finitude as mortals in the world (219, 225). However, he says that "not every building is a dwelling" (143), and the non-dwelling forms of buildings that he suggests are highly suggestive of the kind of hubristic modernism of which he is critical in his other works on technology – speaking of bridges, hangars, stadiums, power stations, highways, dams and market halls. "Only if we are capable of dwelling, only then can we build", Heidegger writes (157). Through building alone we may become "homeless" in the world, and in every generation we "must ever learn to dwell" (159). There is no doubt that Heidegger sees the prioritisation of building over dwelling as a dangerous and pathological imbalance. Like Nietzsche, Heidegger argues that "Western metaphysics is based on [the] priority of reason", and "Western 'metaphysics' is 'logic'" – both narrowly and conceptually conceived (Heidegger, 1991c: 50). As Adorno and Horkheimer will also argue, Heidegger contends that "calculation" is paradigmatic of a narrow form of rationality which has come to dominate the modern world. In lectures in the 1950s, he warns against "the recklessness of exclusively calculative thinking" (Heidegger, 1991a: 129). He argues that the same formal, procedural, methodological rationality exemplified by Leibniz and Descartes in the seventeenth century has culminated in computers ("thinking machines") and the atomic bomb in the twentieth century (101). With modernity comes the "unconditional and thoroughgoing demand" to make things

"mathematically-technically computable" (103), and modern technology urges us further and further towards the "thoroughgoing calculability of objects" (121). Ultimately, he contends, this imperative towards thinking as calculation will threaten what he calls "reflective thinking":

> […] we instead consign our speaking to electronic thinking and calculating machines, an occurrence that will lead modern technology and science to completely new procedures and unforeseeable results that probably will push reflective thinking aside as something useless and hence superfluous (15)

Indeed, challenging and attempting to suspend the rationalistic picture of the world presented to us in Western metaphysics is a prerequisite for real philosophical thought, Heidegger contends that "thinking begins only when we have come to know that reason, glorified for centuries, is the most stiff- necked adversary of thought" (Heidegger, 1977: 112). Arguably, much like other thinkers we have examined in the previous chapters, Heidegger does not reject this calculative conception of reason *per se*, but rather challenges the way it has been heralded as an exemplary and totalising model for philosophy and for human understanding more generally. Furthermore, like others before him Heidegger argues that pure reason should be understood as an exceptional case in the broader context of meaning and human life. In his 1954 essay "The Question Concerning Technology", he argues that what characterises the "essence" of modern technology is not instrumentality, as others have argued, but rather *enframing* (*das Ge-stell*) which "reveals the real as standing-reserve" (Heidegger, 1977: 21). Technology, which embodies the calculating and instrumental characteristics of modern rationality, is therefore contingent upon a form of the world revealing itself as available to us in a certain way. This mode of "enframing" enables the world of modern physics, a world

where nature appears "as a coherence of forces calculable in advance" (21). But the same mode of revealing also "points to the mystery of all revealing, i.e., of truth" (33) which is related to the "bringing-forth" [*poiēsis*, which also connotes "making, fabrication, production" (Inwood, 1999: 168)] of the "true into the beautiful" as poetry and the arts (34).

Heidegger characterises his ambivalence about the essence of technology by citing lines from Hölderin poem "Patmos": "But where danger is, grows / The saving power also" (28, 34). The "extreme danger" of "enframing" – which through its dominance threatens to dethrone, eclipse and obliterate other forms of thinking about and apprehending being – upon reflection gestures towards the "saving power" of "the coming to presence of art" (28, 35). Like Hamann, Herder and the early romantics, Heidegger reinscribes an impoverishingly limited conception of instrumental reason into a broader and much richer context of being, life, language, poetry and expression – such that poetry and advanced industrial technologies have a common basis. He highlights the fundamental inadequacy of pure reason alone to the task of thinking about being by opening up and reformulating the terrain of philosophical debate with novel vocabulary and etymologically inspired reinterpretations of familiar concepts. Thus in his thought well-worn concepts like "logic", "reason", "being", "truth" take on different and often unfamiliar lives and connotations, and he adopts new terms like "beyng" [*seyn*], "enframing", "*Dasein*", "the gigantic" or "the leap". In doing so, he aims to move beyond the increasingly narrow orbits of Western metaphysics, and open up space for thinking about being and the world in new ways – including fresh perspectives from which to reflect on the complex and multivalent genealogies and significations of our philosophical ideas. In this sense he, like others we have looked at, responds to the

narrowing purification of reason with a recontextualising broadening out and opening up of philosophical debate. This is the context in which poetry as a paradigmatic form of listening to being becomes a vital task.

While some commentators have taken a narrower reading of Heidegger's view of language as constitutively "world-disclosing" (e.g. Lafont, 2000), I think an "appropriational" view of shaping language through listening indicates a more complex relationship between human beings and their environments, between the experience of worlds and the mediation of this experience through language and other forms of media. In this respect I would follow Mark Wrathall's suggestion that Heidegger is "not a linguistic constitutionalist" (Wrathall, 2010: 119-155), at least not in a narrow sense. While language plays an important and special role in giving form and structure to human worlds as worlds, and in articulating and disclosing human worlds it does not play this role in a manner which is exclusive or exhaustive. In my view this is commensurate with the eighteenth century turn of Hamann and Herder such that language is intimately connected with human consciousness, experience, culture, society and lifeworlds, but these things are not exhausted by language. The picture that Hamann and Herder paint of language and its relationship to experience show that language is a central and primordial source of *form* and *shape* in the fabric of our thought, they also intimate what might be read as a form of emanationism of creation. Language fundamentally shapes our experience, but our experience is not exhausted by language.

In my reading, this is something that Heidegger shares with Hamann and Herder, and others who draw on their contributions to the eighteenth century linguistic turn.

Hamann and Herder's engagements with Kant lead them to a picture such that language provides the conditions of possibility for experience in a way which is analogous to Kant's transcendental analytic of the categories which structure our phenomenological experience of the world. However, both Hamann and Herder warn against an overly rationalistic or scientific approach to language which proposes that we can purify an idealised conceptual vocabulary from language that would be preferable to the wealth of natural language – as such a view risks overlooking how language is actually put to work in life. As we saw in chapter five, in their view language makes it possible for us to experience the world, and in this way they provide an alternative conception to the empiricist conception of experience as a sensory epistemological input. While experience is enabled by and articulated through language, like Heidegger, Hamann and Herder also suggest that experience is what make linguistic innovation possible – and both also focus on the paradigmatic case of how poets become receptive to experience in their use of language.

On this interpretation Heidegger's appropriational view of language might be seen as an attempt to reconcile language with its "outside" in a way which avoids subject-object metaphysics as well as what Wilfrid Sellars calls the "myth of the given", namely perceptual experience as a kind of foundational epistemological input. Heidegger rejects what he considers the implausibly over-simplistic model of language in we abstract an idealised conception of rationality from grammar. This process of being misled by language is indeed partly responsible for certain outlooks in Western metaphysics, such as the model of a self-transparent, autonomous, reasoning subject which imposes its will on lifeless, dead material. Instead, Heidegger presents a model in which human beings *mutually shape* and are *shaped by* the fabric of thought, which is given form by

language as well as other forms of what Hacking describes as "meaningful media". Language gives shape to human worlds, and different aspects of our environment are brought to awareness through language (as exemplified in poetry). It is, as Hamann and Herder suggest, social and historical fabric which organises and is profoundly entangled with human practices and institutions. Language is conceived in a broad sense – contiguous with and spilling over into other forms of meaningful media which are not just narrowly "linguistic", including music and other forms of expression and meaningful media which give form to our worlds. In relation to this last point, several commentators have argued that Heidegger makes important contributions to thinking about media and communication – both in a broader sense – beyond language in the narrow sense, and specifically beyond the narrower conception of language advocated by some proponents of the analytic linguistic turn (see, e.g. Peters, 1999, 2015; Gunkel & Taylor, 2014). Taylor also places Heidegger within this broader expressivist tradition – which considers a broader range of "meaningful media" relevant to the philosophical study of language and reason, and which he traces back to the works of Hamann and Herder (as we saw at the end of chapter five).

What is the significance of this broad expressivist conception of language? While this is not something which is extensively developed by Heidegger, I shall briefly sketch the potential implications of this conception with reference to the works of Walter Benjamin, who shares Heidegger's broader view of language which shifts from a narrower notion of conceptual material to include a wide range of meaningful media. Benjamin's broad expressivist conception of language highlights the limitations of a disproportionate philosophical preoccupation with conceptual content. Several recent works have acknowledged the influence of Hamann in Benjamin's early works (see, e.g.

Mehlman, 1983; Menninghaus, 1995; Bowie, 1996; Knoll, 1999; Jacobson, 2003). Hamannian ideas about language and experience play a central and formative role in Benjamin's writings in the first few decades of the twentieth century. This view is supported by Hamann's close friend Gershom Scholem's contention that he considered Benjamin a "legitimate container of the most fruitful and most genuine traditions of a Hamann or a Humboldt" (Mehlman, 1983: 332). One of Benjamin's earliest substantive reference to Hamann is in his 1915 essay "On Language as Such and the Language of Man", where he presents a view of language which is influenced by that which Hamann presents in *Aesthetica in Nuce*.[12] Benjamin was familiar with Roberto Unger's 1905 book *Hamanns Sprachtheorie im Zusammenhange seines Denkens*, which may well have been a source for this work. This conception of language is reiterated in Benjamin's 1918 piece "On the Program of Coming Philosophy", wherein Benjamin criticises the narrowness of Kant's conception of experience which he claims is based on a scientific model of "naked, primitive, self-evident experience". Instead he argues that philosophy must be able to accommodate a "higher concept of experience", which can be obtained by "relating knowledge to language, as was attempted by Hamann during Kant's lifetime".

While direct allusions to Hamann in Benjamin's later works are scarce, there are numerous ways in which Benjamin continues to draw on Hamannian themes in his later works. The notion that the fundamental categories of our experience and understanding

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[12] I have yet to find a substantive allusion prior to 1915. This has been confirmed by conversations and correspondence with Benjamin and Hamann scholars (including Michael Schwarz, Winifried Menninghaus, Kenneth Haynes, Alexander Regier, Carol Jacobs and Angus Nicholls).

of the world are to be derived from language remains at the heart of many of Benjamin's works. He continues to advocate a broad expressivist view of language (as in "On Language as Such") – which includes not just words but other forms of human expression. He continues to hold that language and the arts have epistemological as well as genealogical priority over mathematics and science. He unpacks and explores the Hamannian notion that time has its origin in rhythm and breathing, and space has its origin in colour and painting. For example, he goes on to look at how our fundamental conceptions of the world (such as space and time) are shaped by architecture, advertisements, literature, fashion, urban planning, and so on. Benjamin's forays into these areas are underpinned by a philosophical concern with how contemporary experience and understanding are constituted, mediated and organised. One interesting consequence of the elaboration of this move in the twentieth century is broadening the base of evidence that must be considered in relation to making sense of the intersubjective fabric of thought to include things which were previously considered beyond the purview of philosophy.

Benjamin's broad expressivism draws on Hamann's conception of the fundamental unity of different aspects of human life. He suggests that while there are distinct modes of understanding and dealing with the world – each with its own contingent and heterogeneous origins and distinctive aims and ideals – there is also a profound commonality between different forms and genres of human understanding. These conceptions of unity and universality are common to both hermeneutics and critical theory, albeit in a form which is very different to that associated with the analytic linguistic turn. While the latter proposes a conceptual universality predicated on a thin conception of rationality, the former both proposed a contingent constellation of

overlapping affinities to be excavated and elucidated via genealogical, critical, hermeneutical and dialectical inquiry. If analytic philosophy retained an *aprioristic* attachment to *boiling down* something like universal (or *universalisable*) pseudo-Platonic forms and structures of human understanding, hermeneutics and critical theory sought alternative models for contingently *bridging* between the composition of lifeworlds, more or less sensitive to their respective historical, social and cultural constitution. Benjamin's works represent an important moment of the broadening out of philosophical inquiry to examine how our understanding and experience of the world is shaped by language in the broadest possible sense. Given this picture, in his view it is imperative that we strive to accommodate as wide a range of "language material" as is relevant to our inquiry. Thus he extends his interest in language to include changes in the ways in which human beings relate to each other and the worlds around them manifested in advertising, administration, architecture, media and communications technologies, film and urban planning.

Benjamin's works thus may be considered to illustrate and explore the philosophical consequences of a broad expressivist conception of language which goes beyond a focus on verbal utterances to look at language as a public "infrastructure" which constitutes the "materials of thought and experience" (Benjamin, 1999: 392). The *Arcades Project* is of interest as a philosophical work rather than as a form of "mere" cultural critique insofar as the constellation of phenomena under examination are *constitutive* elements of a "thick" picture of language and reason. In this sense Benjamin's work may be seen as one of the immediate sources of inspiration for a "cultural turn"– such that human beings and human rationality cannot be understood

apart from the cultural contexts through which they were shaped, constituted and articulated.

Gadamer on *Bildung* and Linguistic Tradition

Drawing on Heidegger's views on the relation between language, reason and experience, Gadamer offers a closely related but complementary analysis on how we can simultaneously shape and be shaped by language. Gadamer's account focuses on the way in which the horizons of our hermeneutical experience are shaped by the "prejudices" that we inherit from our linguistic traditions, and exercises caution against the Enlightenment "prejudice against prejudice" which advocates a purification or formalisation of the linguistic traditions in and through which we live. Gadamer aspires to articulate an alternative to the scientific conception of method, which he finds in the concept of *Bildung* as a kind of Heideggerian appropriation of tradition. The mutual shaping process that happens when we make language our own is exemplified in poetry, in dialogue and in play.

Following a brief correspondence, Gadamer went to study Aristotle with Heidegger in 1923 (Grondin, 2003: 91-108). Gadamer was intrigued by Heidegger's conception of a "hermeneutics of a facticity" and the notion of hermeneutics came to be the defining concept in his philosophy. For present purposes Gadamer's work can be considered as an attempt to extend some of the insights and moves from Heidegger's novel account of Dasein in order to re-think how human beings understand, interpret and experience truth. As we saw in the last section, Heidegger was inspired by the idea of reconciling the Kantian aspiration to examine the conditions of possibility of experience with

insights from phenomenology, ancient philosophy, medieval theology and literature in order to provide a more compelling and plausible account of what it means to be a human creature in a world *as a world*. Gadamer drew on this work in order to provide a Heideggerian alternative to the narrow philosophical conceptions of an autonomous, ahistorical rationality that were – in Gadamer's view – modelled on epistemological ideals and methods from the natural sciences.

This alternative programme culminated in his 1960 book *Truth and Method*, in which he questioned the centrality and applicability of a certain kind of scientistic conception of method to the humanist tradition – as advanced by thinkers such as Bacon, Descartes, Hume and Mill. Writing in the context of "a new wave of technological animosity to history", the rise of "new statistical and formal methods", and a growing "pressure toward scientific planning and the technical organization of research" (555), Gadamer sought to outline an alternative conception of humanistic inquiry to that of the model of the natural sciences which "wholly governed" the human sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*) in the nineteenth century. He points to the triviality and tautology of examples in the *Logique de Port-Royal*, a widely used logic textbook from the seventeenth century, to illustrate "how little can be achieved in the human sciences by that idea of method" (17). He argues that the methodological rationality that is purported to be a model for all forms of human inquiry is in fact dependent on a complex set of historically situated "prejudices", which structure human understanding, prejudices which the Enlightenment had taken upon itself to eradicate. "The fundamental prejudice of the Enlightenment", Gadamer writes, "is the prejudice against prejudice itself, which denies tradition its power" (273). Like Hamann, Herder, the romantics and Hegel, Gadamer affirms that "reason exists for us only in concrete,

historical terms" and that "it is not its own master but remains constantly dependent on the given circumstances in which it operates" (277). Hence, echoing Heidegger's views on language, Gadamer writes: "history doesn't belong to us; we belong to it" (278). According to Gadamer, this means that rather than the autonomous, free standing, self-governing rationality of the Enlightenment, "the self-awareness of individuals is only a flickering in the closed circuits of historical life" and "the prejudices of the individual, far more than his judgements, constitute the historical reality of his being" (278).

For Gadamer, the drive to separate reason from tradition, to replace prejudice with scientistic methodology is futile and misleading. Alluding to Vico's conception of the *sensus communis* or "communal sense" he says that "what gives the human will its direction is not the abstract universality of reason but the concrete universality represented by the community of a group, a people, a nation, or the whole human race" (19). This *sensus communis*, which was previously understood as traditionary, historical and social in nature, was "emptied and intellectualized by the German enlightenment" (27). In response to the Enlightenment's programme of method, mechanism, objectification and abstraction, Gadamer suggests that "it is to the humanistic tradition that we must turn" (16). Drawing on a combination of history, aesthetics, romantic hermeneutics, Platonic dialectic and Heideggerian phenomenology, Gadamer argues that the humanistic tradition rather than scientific methodology contains within it better models for shedding light on truth and understanding in the human sciences. As "understanding is, essentially, a historically effected event" (299), we must strive to overcome the "artificial narrowness" (16) of the enlightenment conception of reason and come to a broader understanding of how our horizons are historically formed and historically contingent. However, we also need to overcome the objectivising

historicism of the enlightenment, which is reconstructive rather than dialogical. Through his hermeneutics, Gadamer seeks to resituate the rationalistic tradition into a broadly Heideggerian conception of being in the world and in history – and to posit alternative ways of thinking about truth and understanding to the extension and universalisation of method from the natural sciences. Language plays a central role in this alternative account.

In *Truth and Method,* he contends that "language is the medium of hermeneutic experience" (385). Like Hamann and Herder, Gadamer holds that rather than purifying reason from language and tradition, reason must be understood as being fundamentally *enabled by* and *mediated through* language and tradition. He also holds that language gives form and structure to our experience of the world. "It is from language as a medium", he contends, "that our whole experience of the world, and especially hermeneutical experience, unfolds" (453). Alluding to Humboldt, Gadamer writes:

> Language is not just one of man's possessions in the world; rather, on it depends the fact that man
> has a *world* at all. The world as world exists for man as for no other creature that is in the world.
> But this world is verbal in nature. (480)

In contrast to what Gadamer claims is the Enlightenment model of being liberated from tradition, he proposes a liberation from the imperative to be liberated from tradition (the "prejudice against prejudice"), in order to open up space for thinking *with* and *through* tradition which itself constitutes a richer and more reflective form of fluency and freedom. This has an affinity with what I described in the previous section as Heidegger's "appropriational" model of language. Thus Gadamer describes the "fusion of horizons" which takes place in our appropriation of tradition such that our

apprehension of concepts of the past "also include[s] our own comprehension of them" (367). The interpretation and reception of cultural works is paradigmatic in this regard. The process of a "hermeneutically trained consciousness" coming to an understanding of a work is characterised by the "foregrounding and appropriation of one's own fore-meanings and prejudices" (271). Hence Gadamer suggests that "the literary critic, as it were, weaves a little further on the great tapestry of tradition that supports us" (334). It is above all *language* through which this tapestry of tradition is constituted.

Gadamer proposes that philosophers should strive to become literate with this "thick" hermeneutical conception of human rationality as a linguistically mediated tradition – to understand its affordances and how it gives form to our thought. Like Hamann and Herder, Gadamer sees reason as a linguistic, social, cultural and historical fabric through which we are able to obtain an understanding and apprehension of the world (as a world). If we assume that rationality is transparent, autonomous and "pure" we may end up being beholden to the ways in which it is linguistically mediated, historically situated and socially constituted. Instead Gadamer proposes that we strive to come to an understanding of the prejudices, biases, background assumptions and epistemological formations which underpin our hermeneutical horizons. Alluding to Heidegger he characterises these as the "fore-having, fore-sight and fore-conception" of our understanding (272). In some ways, this might be understood in terms of a contingent linguistic *a priori* which gives the fabric of our thought the shapes and tendencies that it possesses for us. Rather than try to overcome, transcend, eliminate or minimise these different biases, we must first learn to be literate with them, to work with and through the prejudices which "constitute the historical reality of [our] being" (283). Here we may be reminded of Herder's conception of the wholly contingent one-

sidedness of the metaphors which shape our perception, which we cannot entirely discard, but which we may understand and use more effectively by striving to obtain a many-sided understanding through the use of different terms, frames, lenses – through *translation*, as opposed to *purification*.

Like Schleiermacher, one of Gadamer's main models for the understanding is conversation or dialogue. Thus he writes that "language has its true being only in dialogue, in coming to an understanding" (443). In order for conversation to occur, Gadamer contends that there must be a shared background of agreement, consensus or – as he later calls it – "solidarity". This is the sense in which he says that "language always presupposes a common world—even if it is only a play world" (407). In conversation there is also a "fusion of horizons" akin to that which he previously described in relation to the reception of cultural works. One of the questions that Gadamer examines in *Truth and Method* is: how can we arrive at an understanding of new and unfamiliar things or of the views of others, given the many ways in which our understanding is fundamentally shaped by history and tradition? In other words, if our apprehension and understanding of the world is structured and mediated through the social, cultural and historical fabric of tradition, how is philosophical innovation possible? How can we reshape the fabric in order to apprehend new things and understand the world in a different way? This is a vital question for anyone committed to a "thick" conception of rationality.

Like Heidegger and others influenced by the eighteenth century linguistic turn, Gadamer attempts to shift the focus away from a strict dichotomy between subject and object. He rejects the possibility of either the mastery and autonomy of our

understanding implied by the subject-centred rationalistic picture, as well as the historical objectification of the understanding that he attributes to earlier historicist accounts deriving from the Enlightenment. He follows the Heideggerian move towards providing an account of the *mutual shaping* of human beings and their linguistically mediated understanding. In this sense he follows other thinkers in making language "public", as Hacking puts it, and considering language a living intersubjective institution. For Gadamer the fabric of thought is something that is performed – paradigmatically in discourse, in dialogue between living embodied beings. In this regard, the Platonic dialogues provide an archetypical philosophical model for coming to understanding in language. His account of the interpretation of texts is also essentially dialogical. Gadamer's conception of "play" is also valuable in highlighting the intersubjective dimension of the emergence of understanding in conversation – highlighting how "all playing is a being-played" and how the "real subject of the game … is not the player but the game itself" (106). Gadamer's notion of play echoes the shift from subjective mastery to the mutually shaping and intersubjective character of hermeneutical experience. This is reinforced by his discussion of metaphorical use of the word play to describe "the play of light, the play of the waves, the play of gears or parts of machinery, the interplay of limbs, the play of forces, the play of gnats" (104). Gadamer proposes the concept of *Bildung* as an alternative to scientistic method. For Gadamer, Bildung is understood as an appropriation of the fabric of language, culture and tradition that shapes us such that "that by which and through which one is formed becomes completely one's own" (10).

Gadamer continues to develop the ideas in *Truth and Method* in his works over the coming decades. In a 1966 essay on "Man and Language" he suggests that "language is

the real medium of human being" which is "as indispensable to human life as the air we breathe" (Gadamer, 1977: 68). In contrast to this ubiquity and indispensability to human life, Gadamer suggests that the *concept* of language is a "recent development" (62). He writes that "language is by no means simply an instrument, a tool" (62). Rather – following Heidegger – it is something by which we are "always already encompassed", which we only become conscious of in "exceptional situations" such as when things go wrong, when we hesitate or stumble, or when we can't find the right words (62-64). Thus he echoes Hamann's, Herder's and Heidegger's views about language being viewed as a living social institution:

> The more language is a living operation, the less we are aware of it. Thus it follows from the self-forgetfulness of language that its real being consists in what is said in it. What is said in it constitutes the common world in which we live and to which belongs also the whole great chain of tradition reaching us from the literature of foreign languages, living as well as dead. The real being of language is that into which we are taken up when we hear it - what is said. (65)

Gadamer also shares the view advanced by Hamann, Herder and Heidegger of the intersubjective character of language. Following his analysis in *Truth and Method*, in his later works Gadamer again follows Heidegger in shifting the focus of his philosophy of language away from a subject-centred view, suggesting that "speaking does not belong in the sphere of the 'I' but in the sphere of the 'We'" (65). Following on from his metaphor of "play" (*spiel*), he also says that the "form of operation of every dialogue can be described in terms of the concept of the game" – again alluding the play of light, objects and forces (66). Much like Hamann's contention in his *Metacritique* that language is at the heart of "reason's misunderstanding with itself", Gadamer suggests

that it is language which gives rise to philosophical misapprehensions about the possibility of "universal objectification" (78).

In a 1977 encyclopaedia article on hermeneutics, Gadamer's views about the philosophical significance of language are summarised for a broader audience with particular brevity and force. "All human knowledge of the world is linguistically mediated", he writes (Gadamer, 2007: 65). The "linguisticality of our being-in-the-world" articulates "the whole realm of our experience". In language we encounter the "heritage in/through which we live our lives" (65). He emphasises the impoverishment of Bacon's conception of experience as a foundational input for science, as well as the views of "experts who have a craze for univocality in their one-sided, semantic epistemology" and "misunderstand what language is" (67). In a remark reminiscent of Hamann and Herder's distinction between living and dead, Gadamer writes:

> They do not realize that the language of concepts cannot be invented, or randomly changed, or used and then put aside; rather, concepts arise out of the element in which we live and move in our thinking. In the highly artificial form of terminology we encounter only the ossified crust of the living stream of thinking and speaking. (67)

With a nod to his debate with Habermas that will span the following decades, he also suggests that a "critique of ideology" that "imagines it is above all ideological presuppositions" is just as dogmatic as "positivistic social science" (68). Gadamer says that critical theory inherits a Kantian appetite for purification which manifests itself in the ideal of "undistorted" communication and "compulsion-free dialogue", which Gadamer regards as mythological and unrealisable "pale abstractions" (69). By contrast, he contends that hermeneutics looks towards the possibility of "genuine

dialogue" such that both parties are aware of the limitations and the finitude of their own understanding and horizons. Returning to one of the opening themes of his *Truth and Method* – namely the limitations of scientistic method and the articulation of alternatives – Gadamer says that one of the central tasks of a philosophical hermeneutics in this sense is "philosophical reflection on the limits of all scientific and technical control of nature and of society" (71).

In a series of radio broadcasts in 1970, he expresses his reservations about universalising a certain scientistic conception of method, at the expense of other forms of understanding:

> This form of science has uniquely changed our planet by privileging a certain form of access to our world, an access that is neither the only nor the most encompassing access that we possess. It is this access to the world by means of methodical isolation and conscious interrogation—in the experiment—which has enabled particular realms in which this isolation can be accomplished to spread out and attain a special hold on our ways of doing things. (94)

The empiricist conception of experience exhibits a drive towards abstraction, decontextualisation and replicability, which has methodological advantages for scientific experimentation, but which is not suitable as a model in all circumstances. It is not only misleading but dangerous if it is taken as a universal model for all forms of human understanding. In remarks which echo those of the Frankfurt School that we shall examine in the following chapter, Gadamer expresses concern about the unconstrained and increasingly aggressive technocratic mediation of the lifeworld (see, e.g. Gadamer, 1998). Rather than looking towards idealised models for unconstrained communication (as Habermas later will), Gadamer looks to unpick the tangle of "social

solidarity" and "commonality" which is the precondition for conversation, and suggests that this can be found in historically situated, socially instituted and linguistically mediated tradition. Thus he writes, echoing Heidegger, that "it is tradition that opens and delimits our historical horizon" (Gadamer, 1977: 81).

In this chapter I have looked at how Heidegger and Gadamer propose that we can simultaneously shape and be shaped by language – with particular reference to linguistic innovation as exemplified in poetry as well as in the appropriation of tradition. In response to Kant's "transcendental analytic" which focuses on establishing the limits of pure reason and the derivation of fundamental phenomenological categories, Heidegger's "existential analytic" focuses on coming to an understanding of language as a living, evolving, intersubjective fabric at the intersection between history and our experience. Gadamer draws on Heidegger's study to look at how we inherit linguistic traditions which provide us with the contours of our worlds and our experience, whilst also accounting for how these linguistic traditions evolve with reference to poetry, dialogue and play.

In the following chapter I shall examine Gadamer's debates with Habermas about language, tradition and critique. In particular, I will examine their respective views regarding the question of to what extent (and how) we can overcome the limitations and prejudices that we inherit through our linguistic traditions. On the one hand, these debates can be seen to reflect the differences between Kant's interest in a universal account of the structure of reason and experience in through his transcendental philosophy and Hamann's insistence that such an account must dependent upon the particular, contingent structures of natural languages. On the other hand, this debate

provides us with a more in depth treatment of the issues raised at the end of the previous

chapter regarding the extent to which rationality and the adjudication between linguistic

world-versions can be seen as version-bound or version-neutral.

8. Shaping and Being Shaped: The Gadamer-Habermas Debates

"We cannot pick and choose our own traditions, but we can be aware that it is up to us *how* we continue them." (Habermas, 1992: 243)

In this chapter I shall examine debates between Gadamer and Habermas about language, tradition and critique. In the previous chapter I looked at Heidegger and Gadamer's hermeneutic conceptions of how we shape and are shaped by language – including how linguistic tradition can be considered to "speak us" and their accounts of linguistic innovation in the paradigmatic cases of poetry and conversation. Habermas affirms and draws upon many aspects of these hermeneutic views of language and interpretation. However, he also contests Gadamer's claim for the universality of hermeneutics, suggesting that hermeneutics is not able to provide an adequate account of extra-linguistic factors which lead to distortions and pathologies of linguistically constituted rationality. Habermas argues that this shortcoming should be addressed by means of a quasi-transcendental account of context-independent linguistic and communicative capacities. Gadamer's rejoinder to Habermas and the subsequent debates that unfold between them have notable parallels with earlier encounters between Kant, Hamann and Herder. I shall argue that while Habermas's aspirations for a reconstructed universality and emphases on the power of reflection are welcome, the status and contents of a quasi-transcendental analysis of universal communicative capacities stand in need of further elucidation. I conclude with some reflections on different conceptions of the universality of rationality – contrasting Habermas's

proposals for a formalised reconstruction of the extra-linguistic conditions of communicative capacity with a detranscendentalised conception of the intra-linguistic and inter-linguistic communicative action required for consensus around different "styles of reasoning" to obtain in different settings. I conclude by suggesting that a critical theory of society with a serious interest in a more comprehensive analysis and engagement with the forms of reasoning operative within different social, economic and administrative contexts would be better served by the latter conception.

Habermas on the Detranscendentalisation of Reason

Habermas is the last thinker that I shall examine in my thesis as part of a constellation of philosophers who contribute to an alternative conception of language as an evolving, socially and historically situated fabric of thought. However, as noted above, his relationship with the thinkers and texts presented in this thesis is not always straightforward. In this section, I shall examine how he draws on insights from the eighteenth century linguistic turn in German philosophy to bring the actually or historically existing social constitution of rationality into the philosophical picture. In the next section I shall look at Habermas's views about the limits of the legacy of the eighteenth century linguistic turn – and in particular his critique of Gadamer's universal hermeneutics and proposals towards a universal pragmatics.

Habermas's initial interest in the linguistic turn and philosophical hermeneutics can be considered in relation to problems in two different areas. Firstly, in relation to philosophy of the social sciences, Habermas praises Gadamer's critique of an "absolutism of a general methodology of the empirical sciences", as manifested in the positivistic claims of philosophers like Popper (Habermas, 1988: 167). In his 1967 book

On the Logic of the Social Sciences Habermas discusses the "reconstruction of the buried hermeneutic dimension" both in relation to the "symbolically prestructured object domain of social science" (xiii), as well as in relation to the "fundamental assumptions" of social scientific theory (86). Secondly, the thick conception of linguistically constituted reason that emerges from the eighteenth century linguistic turn provides an alternative to the narrow conception of "instrumental reason" discussed by Adorno and Horkheimer. Habermas sought to build on this alternative conception of reason in the service of a reformulated version of the Enlightenment ideal of emancipation.

In order to better understand what Habermas was reacting against, I will briefly examine Adorno and Horkheimer's views of rationality, particularly as described in their 1944 *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Adorno and Horkheimer's views are profoundly informed by the work of Max Weber, who in turn draws on Nietzsche. Weber argues that modern western societies are increasingly driven by "instrumental rationality" (*Zweckrationalität*) rather than "value-rationality" (*Wertrationalität*). According to Weber's account, whereas value-rationality is informed by fixed, absolute ends or values, which are non-negotiable and intrinsically important, instrumental rationality lacks absolute fixed ends and hence may continually re-calculate the relative priority of different ends. He says that instrumental rationality can be observed at work in the growing bureaucratisation, marketisation, quantification and scientism of areas of life that were previously governed by traditional religious, social and cultural values and practises. The rationalisation in modern societies is a major theme throughout Weber's works on economics, law, administration and religion. Like the romantics and Nietzsche, Weber is critical of this increasingly narrow conception of reason as a

calculating instrument, and concerned about its deleterious effects on society. In his 1905 classic *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber conjectures how the "mechanized petrification" and "convulsive self-importance" of instrumental reason might give rise to "specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart" (Weber, 2001: 124).

In their 1944 account of "instrumental reason" Adorno and Horkheimer combine elements of Weber's account of rationality with insights and approaches from Freud, Marx and Nietzsche to paint a very dark picture of the unexpected consequences of enlightenment rationality. One of their central contentions is that there is a kind of barbarism inherent within the enlightenment project, which they explicitly connect to the holocaust and the atrocities of the Nazi regime during the second world war – a claim which is later elaborated by Zygmunt Bauman (Bauman, 1989). They contend that technology is the "essence" of enlightenment rationality, which "aims to produce neither concepts nor images, nor the joy of understanding, but method, exploitation of the labor of others, capital" (Horkheimer and Adorno, 2002: 2). The logical culmination of the project to purify reason, according to Adorno and Horkheimer, is a "ruthless" and contentless instrumentality, pure method which has "eradicated the last remnant of its own self-awareness" (2). This purified reason "denounces the words of language, which bear the stamp of impressions, as counterfeit coin that would be better replaced by neutral counters" (2), and is suspicious of "anything which does not conform to the standard of calculability and utility" (3). Enlightenment rationality becomes "purposiveness without purpose", "neutral with regard to ends" (69), with "no substantial goals" (70) and "devoid of content" (71). It liquidates objects through abstraction (9); it replaces concepts with formulae and causes with probabilities (3); it

turns everything - including living beings – into a "repeatable, replaceable process" (65); and it transforms thought into an "autonomous, automatic process, aping the machine" (19). Ultimately, Adorno and Horkheimer contend, this instrumental enlightenment rationality stands in the service of the flow of capital, about which it is incapable of critical reflection:

> [...] reason itself has become merely an aid to the all-encompassing economic apparatus. Reason serves as a universal tool for the fabrication of all other tools, rigidly purpose-directed and as calamitous as the precisely calculated operations of material production, the results of which for human beings escape all calculation. Reason's old ambition to be purely an instrument of purposes has finally been fulfilled. (23)

"The formalization of reason is merely the intellectual expression of mechanized production", Adorno and Horkheimer write. Their account of the "hollowing out" (218) and mechanisation of human reason is the centrepiece of a broader critical account of the failure of the enlightenment, and its complicity in the emergence of fascism, global capitalism, mass consumer culture, and new hitherto unseen forms of oppression, barbarism and violence.

In Habermas's view this critique of instrumental reason goes too far. He considers Adorno and Horkheimer's diagnosis of Enlightenment rationality to be too essentialist and deterministic, leaving too little room for non-oppressive forms of rationality that may be used in the service of social and political emancipation. Habermas advances an alternative conception of rationality through a move which has strong affinities with the linguistic metacritique of Hamann and Herder – which attempts to situate one-sided or pathological forms of rationality within the broader context of the operations of

linguistically mediated rationality in human lifeworlds. Instrumental reason is thus a derivative and deficient sub-specimen of a thicker "communicative" rationality which is inherent within the "natural" linguistic infrastructure of inter-subjectively constituted lifeworlds.

One of Habermas's crucial contributions to the tradition that I have examined in the previous chapters is to highlight the consequences of more serious interdisciplinary engagements to bring the actually or historically existing social constitution of rationality *into the philosophical picture*. This can be contrasted with the view that this constitution can be effectively considered of secondary importance – as we see in more idealistic, *aprioristic* accounts (such as in contemporary analytic philosophy's "armchair" thought-experimenters) which remain attached to a meaningful distinction between concepts and their contingent "instantiation" and mediation in social and historical formations which can be methodologically bracketed for the purposes of philosophical inquiry. This move to make the social and historical constitution of reason relevant to philosophical inquiry can be considered a "detranscendentalising" move which has affinities with Hegel's critique of Kant. The analysis that he gives in his 1962 book *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* is paradigmatic of this move (Habermas, 1991).

Habermas's task in this work is to trace the emergence of *Öffentlichkeit* – meaning "publicness", "openness" or "publicity" and most often translated as "public sphere" – which he defined as "a realm in our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed" (Habermas, 1974: 51). Through a "social-historical analysis" he charts the rise of what he calls the liberal bourgeois public sphere from the eighteenth

century – along with associated conceptions of civil society, public opinion and the public use of reason. Central to this account are the institutions and practices of publicity and public opinion (such as "news letters", journals, salons, coffee houses and societies) as well as the broader social, cultural, economic and political contexts of these phenomena – from the development of the family sphere to the rise of new technologies and industries. For Habermas these societal institutions and practices are not just contingent epiphenomena, they are an indispensable part of any plausible account of how public rationality is actually constituted.

Though the bourgeois public sphere is fatally flawed (for example, *de facto* restricting its membership to educated, property-owning men), Habermas holds that it plants seeds for the ideal of a universal public reason the legacy of which will provide normative standards against which actually existing structures of publicity can be measured. Echoing broader themes associated with other members of the Frankfurt School, the latter part of this book traces the "disintegration" of the bourgeois public sphere as a result of "neomercantilist refeudalization" commencing in the late nineteenth century which sees the aspiration for "unhampered communication and public rational-critical debate" (1991: 209) replaced with the consumption of mass media, commodification and manipulation. Though his account in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* stops short of elaborating a more normative conception of what a non-exclusionary post-bourgeois public sphere might look like, its insistence on the importance of how public reason is mediated and given form in actually existing institutions coupled with a commitment to reworking universal, progressive ideals associated with the Enlightenment in the service of criticising and

improving these institutions makes it a milestone in the twentieth century legacy of the metacritical tradition.

In his 1981 book *The Theory of Communicative Action* draws on insights from the linguistic turn, as well as suggesting the need for a quasi-transcendental account of the universally shared conditions of possibility for communicative action. Habermas engages with the social theories of Durkheim, Marx, Mead, Parsons, Weber in order to further elaborate an alternative, detranscendentalised account of human reason which is capable of providing insight into its pathological consequences, whilst also leaving room for its emancipatory potential (Habermas, 1985a, 1985b). While *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* focuses on giving a social and historical account of the genesis of actually existing public rationality, *The Theory of Communicative Action* focuses on providing a framework for thinking about pubic rationality in order to strengthen and clarify the "normative foundations of a critical theory of society" (1985b: 396-397). Central to this account is understanding reason as a form of communicative *action*, which is *performed* by different publics in different contexts. He explicitly draws on and responds to the sociologist Talcott Parsons's attempt to provide an account of systems of social action in his *The Structure of Social Action* (Parsons, 1949). Rather than focusing exclusively on the theoretical reification of abstractions derived from the *semantic* structure of language, Habermas looks at the *pragmatics* of rationality as it is articulated in living social institutions. This entails a shift from *rationality* (in the singular) to *rationalities* (in the plural). One implication of this shift is that it is no longer plausible to exclusively focus on the excavation and purification of a single set of substantive *a priori* structures and categories of thought that will be held by everyone. Instead Habermas calls for collective inquiry into the conditions of possibility for communicative action in different settings – including "interdisciplinary research on

the selective pattern of capitalist modernization" (1985b: 397). Habermas argues that a quasi-transcendental analysis of the universal capacities of communication is also needed in order to provide the basis for reflection, and to guard against the subsumption of reason into linguistic tradition.

Habermas proposes using the concepts of "system" and "lifeworld" in order to ground the normative analyses of critical theories of society - suggesting that "that we conceive of society simultaneously as a system and as a lifeworld" (1985b: 120). On the one hand he suggests that we look for practices of rationality in the linguistic constitution of lifeworlds - a term which he draws from phenomenology in the tradition of Husserl and defines as "the context-forming background of processes of reaching understanding" (1985b: 204). Like Hamann and Herder, Habermas suggests that languages are repositories for social worlds. But these languages are not transcendentally separate from, but rather part of the fabric of intersubjectively articulated phenomenological lifeworlds. On the other hand, we can examine the rationalities which inhere within more formal *systems* which organise life – paradigmatically exemplified by markets and bureaucracies. Unhindered, these systems may begin to take over lifeworlds rather than serving them (e.g. through processes of marketisation and bureaucratisation) leading to various kinds of social pathologies - from alienation to exploitation. Habermas contends that the linguistically mediated communicative infrastructure of lifeworlds may provide resources for the normative critique and coordination of social action to redirect these systems and to counter their potentially damaging consequences.

Habermas explicitly indicates his debt to the German "linguistic turn" in the eighteenth century – in particular regarding the "world-making character" of natural language (Habermas, 1999a: 417). He flags the importance of Hamann's characterisation of language in his *Metacritique* as "*a priori* contingent and indifferent, but *a posteriori* necessary and indispensable". Like Hamann and many other thinkers influenced by the eighteenth German linguistic turn, Habermas argues that language plays a central role in how we act, organise ourselves and experience the world around us – suggesting that "a language articulates in advance the conceptual space of possible encounters with anything in the world" and that "my linguistic knowledge organises my actual perception" (1999b: 139). Habermas differentiates his own contribution to philosophy after the linguistic turn in terms of his focus on pragmatics, arguing that this opens up space for a "dialectic of world-disclosure and learning processes within the world" and undermines the "monolithic and fateful character of a world view prejudging all and everything" (1999a: 440). He says that the turn from semantics to pragmatics means that the "pathologies of modernity can […] no longer be attributed to the semantics of an inescapably deforming pre-understanding of the world", and also has the consequence that "philosophy can no longer solve the problem on its own" (441).

In this section I have highlighted how Habermas reiterates the picture of language that I have explored in the latter chapters of this thesis: that human beings shape the cultural forms which surround them, and are "shaped in turn by those intersubjectively shared symbolic and historical realities of culture and society" (Habermas, 2015). He thus argues that philosophy should be considered a "parasitic undertaking that lives off learning processes in other spheres", in order to provide critical scrutiny of them as a

"secondary role of a form of reflection" (Habermas, 2015). However, this is only one half of the story. Habermas also emphasises the limits of this picture of linguistically mediated understanding, and sketches a quasi-transcendental account of the human communicative capacities that in some regards shares more in common with Kant's *Critique* than Hamann and Herder's linguistic metacritiques. How does he attempt to reconcile these two different objectives: to provide a quasi-transcendental account of universal linguistic capacities, as well as to draw on the legacy of Hamann and Herder's linguistic metacritiques to provide a detranscendentalised account of human rationality as a socially and historically situated fabric of thought? Can he succeed in reconciling these two objectives? I shall examine these issues in the following section.

Habermas's Critique of the Hermeneutic Claim to Universality

While Habermas embraced many aspects of the "powerful movements of detranscendentalization" precipitated by Hamann, Humboldt, Hegel and Schleiermacher for opening up "a new continent of history, culture and society" (Habermas, 2015), he also had serious concerns about its claims about the fundamental role of tradition in giving shape to human understanding without a counterbalancing conception of the human capacity for reflection. These concerns were surfaced in debates between Gadamer and Habermas that started in the 1960s. Given the wealth of secondary literature on this topic (see, e.g. Misgeld, 1976; Wellmer, 1976; Mendelson, 1979; Ricœur, 1981; Jay, 1982; Shapiro, 1994; How, 1995; Cameron, 1996; Dallmayr, 2000; Palmer, 2000; Piercey, 2004), I shall keep my account focused on features of the debate which are most relevant in the present context.

Gadamer's hermeneutics played an important role in Habermas's work. Gadamer invited Habermas to Heidelberg, where Habermas taught from 1961 to 1964. Habermas drew on and offered criticisms of Gadamer's *Truth and Method* in his 1967 *On the Logic of the Social Sciences* (Habermas, 1988). In the same year, Gadamer offered a response to Habermas's criticisms in an essay on "Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and the Critique of Ideology" (Gadamer, 1985). Beginning with these early engagements in Heidelberg, the public debate between the two thinkers continued to develop over the following decades, including in a further essay from Gadamer in the same year, "On the Scope and Function of Hermeneutical Reflection" (Gadamer, 1977: 18-43); in a 1970 essay from Habermas "The Hermeneutic Claim to Universality" (Habermas, 1989); and in a 1971 response from Gadamer "Reply to My Critics" (Gadamer, 1989b). In the present context I shall focus on the more substantive parts of the debates between Gadamer and Habermas which take place in the 1960s and 1970s. It is worth noting that Habermas's work on universal pragmatics is not undertaken until the late 1970s and early 1980s after the debates with Gadamer were *de facto* over – though many of the main insights, moves and starting points for Habermas's work on universal pragmatics are arguably present in the earlier debates with Gadamer, albeit in germinal form.

In this section I shall focus on Habermas's initial engagement with Gadamer's work in his *On the Logic of the Social Sciences*, where he both praises the seminal contributions of philosophical hermeneutics in general and Gadamer's *Truth and Method* in particular, as well as expressing concerns about what he considers to be their serious limitations. On the one hand Habermas says that Gadamer has compellingly demonstrated that "hermeneutic understanding is linked with transcendental necessity to

the articulation of an action-orientating self-understanding" (Habermas, 1988: 230). He affirms the centrality of language in Gadamer's work, adding that "it makes good sense to conceive of language as a kind of metainstitution on which all social institutions are dependent" (239). However, Habermas takes issue with the scope and implications of Gadamer's claims. Thus he later describes the twofold task of his *On the Logic of the Social Sciences* as: (i) the "reconstruction of the buried hermeneutical dimension" in the social sciences (as discussed above); accompanied by (ii) "an argument against hermeneutics' claim to universality". In rejecting the hermeneutic claim to universality, he replaces it with a claim to universality of his own, which – in the present context – can be read as an attempt to combine Kant's aspiration for universality pursued through his transcendental critique of pure reason with insights from the eighteenth century linguistic turn that developed from Hamann and Herder's metacritique. Indeed, Habermas indicates this when he complements Cassirer on reading Humboldt "from the perspective of a Kant enlightened, rather than rejected, by Hamann" (6). Habermas proposes to pursue this course by means of an engagement with theoretical and empirical research in the social sciences and linguistics (in particular formal pragmatics) – in order to give a quasi-transcendental analysis of the universal conditions of possibility for communicative rationality.

Habermas argues that Gadamer overestimates our dependence upon tradition and underestimates our ability to obtain critical distance in relation to it through reflection. In particular, he suggests that Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics places too great an emphasis on a contextualist conception of rationality – such that "the conditions of rationality change with time and place, epoch and culture" – and thus "gets lost" in an

"irrationalism" which "fails to acknowledge the transcending force of reflection that is also at work in it" (172). Thus he writes that:

> Gadamer's prejudice in favor of the legitimacy of prejudices (or prejudgments) validated by tradition is in conflict with the power of reflection, which proves itself in its ability to reject the claim of traditions. Substantiality disintegrates in reflection, because the latter not only confirms but also breaks dogmatic forces. Authority and knowledge do not converge. Certainly, knowledge is rooted in actual tradition; it remains bound to contingent conditions. But reflection does not wear itself out on the facticity of traditional norms without leaving a trace. It is condemned to operate after the fact; but, operating in retrospect, it unleashes retroactive power. (170)

Habermas is concerned that Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics provides an inadequate account of the reflective and reasoning capacities of human beings which indeed derive a substantive part of their specific form and content from linguistic traditions (as Gadamer suggests), but which are not exhausted by these traditions. Whilst Habermas follows Hamann and Herder's linguistic metacritical appraisal of Kant's transcendental account of human rationality up to a point, he resists concluding that we can provide a complete account of reason with reference to the contingent structures of a particular linguistically articulated world-version. He reads Gadamer's claim for the universality of hermeneutics as implying an identity relation between reason and a particular language, with no remainder. On the contrary, Habermas sees it as a crucial objective of a philosophy of language to leave such a gap between universal rational reflective capacities and specific linguistic traditions – as it is by means of this gap that we are able to exercise the freedom that is required to reformulate and critique them. Hence Habermas writes in a later essay that "reflexivity and objectivity are

fundamental traits of language, as are creativity and the integration of language into life-praxis" (Habermas, 1989: 249).

Without this universal reflective capacity, Habermas suggests that Gadamer's hermeneutics remains unable to account for or react critically to distortions in the very fabric of rationality. This is a particularly serious allegation precisely because of the "detranscendentalising movements" that took hold in the wake of the eighteenth century linguistic turn – which suggest that socially and historically contingent linguistic forms provide the conditions of possibility for reason as such, and which could thus render us "locked in" to particular deformed or distorted forms of rationality, undermining their emancipatory potential. Habermas thus suggests two major shortcomings of Gadamer's hermeneutics: firstly, as it focuses on a totalizing account of the role of linguistic traditions in giving form to rationality, as opposed to (following Kant) a more substantive conception of the universally held capacities for communicative rationality which also make it possible for us to critically reflect upon these traditions; and secondly, as it remains insufficiently attentive to the full implications of the detranscendentalising perspective on language that follows from Hamann and Herder's linguistic metacritique – in particular overlooking the extra-linguistic social settings of linguistic traditions. In relation to this second point, Habermas accuses Gadamer of a kind of "linguistic idealism" (Habermas, 1988: 174) such that linguistic traditions are considered apart from the social, cultural, political and economic forms of life through which they are constituted, and appraised predominantly (if not exclusively) *qua* linguistic forms.

Habermas considers that without other complementary accounts of (i) universal

communicative capacities, and (ii) the broader societal contexts of actually existing linguistic traditions, the "linguistic idealism" of hermeneutics will lack the resources for a *critique* of linguistic reason, in both the Kantian epistemological sense and the Marxist political-economic sense of critique. If this is the case, then Gadamer's hermeneutics will remain unable to account for the social processes upon which language depends, which mean that it can function as a "medium of domination and social power" (172), which gives rise to "distorted communication" and "pseudo-communicative agreement" which cannot serve as the basis for emancipatory communicative action. Hence Habermas writes that:

> An interpretive sociology that hypostatizes language as the subject of life forms and of tradition binds itself to the idealist presupposition that linguistically articulated consciousness determines the material being of life-practice. But the objective context of social action is not reducible to the dimension of intersubjectively intended and symbolically transmitted meaning. The linguistic infrastructure of society is a moment in a complex that, however symbolically mediated, is also constituted by the constraints of reality: by the constraint of external nature, which enters into the procedures of technological exploitation, and by the constraint of inner nature, which is reflected in the repressions of social relationships of power. (174)

In the context of social scientific research, this demands a combination of theoretical and methodological approaches which is together capable of appraising the whole "objective context" of linguistic traditions, which can be understood as a complex of "language, labor, and domination" rather than seeing tradition as a kind of "absolute power" that "completely sublimate[s] social processes" (174). Rather than just examining traditions *per se* through the lens of hermeneutics, such an outlook would aim to "indicate the conditions external to tradition under which transcendental rules of worldview and action change empirically" (174); as well as to "understand the functions

that cultural tradition serves in the system as a whole", and particularly in relation to "the system of social labor and political domination" (187).

Habermas's two-fold critique of Gadamer can be summarized by saying that the latter is *too Kantian* in his linguistic idealism (overlooking the extra-linguistic social and historical factors which shape linguistic tradition); and he is *not Kantian enough* in relation to his account of human reason (overlooking the enduring, context-independent capacities which make critical reflection on linguistic traditions possible). Thus Habermas writes in relation to the first point that Gadamer is "prevented by the residues of Kantianism retained in Heidegger's existential ontology from drawing the conclusions suggested by his own analyses" – towards a detranscendentalised account of "linguistic structures and the empirical conditions under which they change historically" (175). In this regard, Gadamer's hermeneutics "is not objective enough" and "comes up against the limits of the context of tradition from the inside" (172). In relation to the second point, Habermas contends that Gadamer's failure to recognise the universal dimension of Kant's transcendental analysis of the reasoning capacities of human beings effectively means that hermeneutics is held hostage to a "dogmatic recognition of tradition" and unable to recognize or tackle distortions or deformities in human communicative capacities.

How does Habermas propose to address these issues with philosophical hermeneutics? In both cases he looks beyond philosophy in his response. In relation to the problem of linguistic idealism, Habermas suggests that hermeneutic approaches in the social sciences should be combined with other approaches which can give account of the broader contexts of linguistic traditions – including labour and domination. Here

he suggests that rather than rather than ceding to the constitutive role of linguistic tradition through an exclusive focus on "interpretive sociology" which focuses on understanding meanings in different settings, this must be augmented with other "empirical-analytic" and "normative-analytic" research approaches which can tell us more about the broader extra-linguistic social, economic and political structures which mutually shape and are shaped by linguistic traditions (in particular by engaging with sociological theory with scope and ambition to the structural-functionalism exemplified by Talcott Parsons). In this regard, Habermas can be considered to tackle linguistic idealism by drawing on the detranscendentalising tendency of German philosophy after the linguistic turn to give a richer empirical analysis of the broader social and historical conditions which make linguistic traditions possible, and which may also contribute to their distortion and deformation. Here he gives the example of the "theoretical" and scientific (as opposed to purely hermeneutical) aspects of psychoanalysis, which aspire to provide a holistic account of the psychodynamic development of human beings in terms of extra-linguistic instincts, motivations and drives – as well as being able to account for pathologies and distortions in development in terms of "lawlike hypotheses" (185).

In relation to his accusation that Gadamer is not Kantian enough – overlooking the universal character of his *Critique* – Habermas suggests that empirical research in the social sciences can help to elaborate the space for freedom that always already exists between human communicative capacities and particular linguistic traditions, thus avoiding the absolutizing claims that hermeneutics makes about how human reason can be fully accounted for with reference to these traditions. Thus he proposes an analysis of the "quasi-transcendental" system of rules and human capacities which make provide

the conditions of possibility for linguistic traditions (70). Why "quasi-transcendental" as opposed to the kind of transcendental account that Kant gives in his *Critique*? Habermas suggests that while these conditions can be considered to be universal, they can nevertheless potentially vary:

> […] no one can seriously expect an empirical science to consist only of meditations on the transcendental structure of the social world. Clearly, a sociological investigation focused on the level of intersubjectivity cannot be conducted in the classical form of a transcendental analysis of consciousness, whether the analysis be a Neo-Kantian or a phenomenological one. Because the transcendental rules that an interpretive sociology must clarify are altered under empirical conditions, because they can no longer be considered to be invariant properties of a consciousness that transcends phenomena as such, they can be made accessible to empirical investigation. (1988: 111)

How does Habermas envisage that such a quasi-transcendental analysis may be pursued? One line of inquiry issues from a distinction that he draws from Wittgenstein, who "conceives language games as a complex of language and praxis" (130). This distinction enables Habermas to separate analyses of the content of linguistic traditions (amenable to hermeneutical investigation), from the analyses of the extra-linguistic social conditions which make these traditions possible, which he describes as the "rules of communication processes" (117). Here he draws on theory and empirical research from linguistics, in particular noting Chomsky's work on "a general theory of ordinary-language structures" (68-69, 138, 141, 143), as well as work on the "metatheory" of the universal conditions that make all languages possible, the possibility of which he frames as follows:

> Does not the language of the metatheory remain tied to the grammar of specific ordinary languages? Or can a categorial framework independent of culture be found that will not only allow correct descriptions of linguistic structures but also make possible the identification of that set of formal properties that systematically distinguish every traditional language from an arbitrary or accidental sequence of structural descriptions? (140-141)

This formalised, theoretical description of the conditions that make all natural languages possible is the heart of Habermas's quasi-transcendental analysis – which will be become his preferred means of demonstrating "the unity of analytic reason in the pluralism of language games", as well as showing that "the relativity of linguistic worldviews and the monadology of language games are both illusory" (143). Habermas sees this unity in terms of what all languages share in common:

> Reason, which is always bound up with language, is also always beyond its languages. Only by destroying the particularities of *languages*, which are the only way in which it is embodied, does reason live in *language*. It can purge itself of the residue of one particularity, of course, only through the transition to another. This mediating generality is attested to by the act of translation. Formally, it is reflected in the trait that all traditional languages have in common and that guarantees their transcendental unity, namely, the fact that in principle they can all be translated into one another. (144)

This interest in the late 1960s will later form the basis of his efforts towards a "universal pragmatics" which come to occupy a central role in his work from the late 1970s, wherein he aims to provide a "postmetaphysical yet nondefeatist" conception of reason by means of a rational reconstruction of the universal conditions of possibility for human communicative capacities (cf. Cooke, 1994).

Gadamer's Metacritical Response to Habermas's Critique

How does Gadamer respond to Habermas's twofold critique of philosophical hermeneutics? Firstly, against the charge that he overlooks the context-independent, universal capacities for human communication (and the virtues of Kant's transcendental analysis), Gadamer argues that hermeneutics precisely aims to provide such a basis in its claims for universality, and in doing so it does not fall prey to a kind of linguistic relativism that would render members of different linguistic traditions unable to communicate, nor a dogmatism in relation to tradition that precludes the possibility of reflection. Secondly, against changes of linguistic idealism (that he overlooks the social and historical conditions of possibility of linguistic traditions), Gadamer rejects Habermas's claim that according to hermeneutics "linguistically articulated consciousness claims to determine all the material being of life-practice" (Gadamer, 1977: 35) – and furthermore argues that Habermas's "highly abstract concept of coercion-free discourse … totally loses sight of the actual conditions of human praxis" (Gadamer, 2007: 29). Despite Habermas's claims for the extra-linguistic empirical basis for his quasi-transcendental analysis, Gadamer argues that this does not mean that the analysis itself can be considered extra-hermeneutical. I will examine each of these two counter-arguments in turn.

Gadamer argues that his universal hermeneutics provides a more compelling philosophical account of human communicative capacities and the possibility of reflection on tradition than Habermas's proposed quasi-transcendental theoretical approach to linguistic action. He reaffirms his view that "language is the fundamental mode of operation of our being-in-the-world and the all-embracing form of the

constitution of the world" (Gadamer, 1989a: 147), and that through his hermeneutics he aimed to highlight "the essentially linguistic character of all human experience" (Gadamer, 1985: 275). Gadamer suspects that Habermas's rejection of the hermeneutic claim to universality issues from a fundamental misunderstanding with the scope and character of linguistically articulated culture and tradition which is the subject of hermeneutical inquiry. In Gadamer's view, while the world cannot be considered to be entirely subsumed by linguistic traditions without remainder (thus we can meaningfully talk about a world outside language), human understanding of the world is nevertheless delimited by linguistic articulation. Thus he reiterates his claim in *Truth and Method* that "being which can be understood is language". The general scope that Gadamer claims for hermeneutics means that it can be considered to apply to all areas of human life and human understanding which are mediated by language, including everything from negotiating with others in the course of our everyday lives; legal and policy debates; the coordination of economic and administrative systems which underpin national and transnational labour forces; the activities of scientific and technical communities; and organising the protection and maintenance of planetary ecological systems. Thus Gadamer writes that hermeneutics extends beyond the interpretation of classical, literary and legal texts, and into the processes of interpretation operative within modern scientific contexts – such as in the creation and use of statistics:

> The hermeneutical question, as I have characterized it, is not restricted to the areas from which I began in my own investigations. My only concern there was to secure a theoretical basis that would enable us to deal with the basic factor of contemporary culture, namely, science and its industrial, technological utilization. Statistics provide us with a useful example of how the hermeneutical dimension encompasses the entire procedure of science. It is an extreme example, but it shows us that science always stands under definite conditions of methodological abstraction

and that the successes of modern sciences rest on the fact that other possibilities for questioning are concealed by abstraction. This fact comes out clearly in the case of statistics, for the anticipatory character of the questions statistics answer makes it particularly suitable for propaganda purposes. Indeed, effective propaganda must always try to influence initially the judgment of the person addressed and to restrict his possibilities of judgment. Thus what is established by statistics seems to be a language of facts, but which questions these facts answer and which facts would begin to speak if other questions were asked are hermeneutical questions. Only a hermeneutical inquiry would legitimate the meaning of these facts and thus the consequences that follow from them. (153)

The claim of hermeneutic extends as far as language is implicated in the articulation of social worlds and the coordination of social action. Gadamer suspects that Habermas considers linguistic tradition in a narrower sense – perhaps as a repository of traditional cultural "content", as exemplified in canonical literary or historical texts in the humanities or in the customary values and ways of life that we inherit. On the contrary, Gadamer emphasises that in the context of hermeneutics linguistic traditions can incorporate any linguistic scheme which articulates a world for human understanding or social action in any context. Thus he contends that "language is not only an object in our hands, it is the reservoir of tradition and the medium in and through which we exist and perceive our world" (29), and that we live through it "not only in the concrete interrelations of work and politics but in all the other relationships and dependencies that comprise our world" (32). Hermeneutics does not just concern itself with "mere" culture or tradition (ideas which Gadamer traces the genesis of in his other work), but with "linguisticality that operates in all understanding" (29). Tradition does not simply entail that "texts and monuments" are passed down to us, but rather "it is the world itself which is communicatively experienced and continuously entrusted to us as an infinitely open task to pass on" (Gadamer, 2007: 26).

Thus Gadamer contests Habermas's argument that there is something in the hermeneutical interest in tradition which is either dogmatic or conservative. The hermeneutical interest in tradition is not dogmatic *per se* as traditions are always already continually reflectively re-appropriated. Hence, Gadamer writes:

> Now it is obvious that the phrase which I occasionally use, that much depends on establishing a connection with tradition, promotes misunderstanding. Contained within this is in no sense a preference for that which is customary, to which one must be blindly subservient. On the contrary, the phrase 'connection to tradition' means only that the tradition is not exhausted by the heritage one knows and is conscious of. In this way tradition cannot be relegated to an adequate consciousness of history. Alteration of the existing conditions is no less a form of connection to tradition than is a defense of existing conditions. Tradition exists only in constantly becoming other than it is. (Gadamer, 1989b: 288)

The idea of culture and tradition as "objects" apart from us arises from a misleading objectivist conception of history which does not acknowledge the "operativeness of history in our conditionedness and finitude" (Gadamer, 1977: 28). However, in Gadamer's view our means of reflectively appropriating, challenging and reconfiguring different aspects of these traditions (as Habermas values) are given to us through linguistic traditions. This is the sense in which human beings and linguistic traditions are mutually constitutive – as described in relation to Heidegger and Gadamer's "appropriational" conception of language which we simultaneously shape and are shaped by. On this view the norms, values and practices of objectivity associated with modern science are also given to us through particular kinds of scientific institutions and forms of life which can themselves be considered in terms of linguistic tradition. To say that our communicative capacities are articulated through these various linguistic traditions is not to say that we are beholden to or that we must be deferential or

subservient to them. Likewise, while Habermas alludes to Burke and suggests that there is a conservative streak to Gadamer's hermeneutics, Gadamer counters that there is nothing inherently conservative about tradition – and there are politically revolutionary and emancipatory political traditions (and even anti-traditional traditions), as well as conservative ones. While Habermas may try to argue that his quasi-transcendental analysis is "meta-hermeneutical" or "extra-hermeneutical", Gadamer counters that Habermas's critique is "itself a linguistic act of reflection" (30).

Gadamer is also very explicit that the assertion that "understanding is language-bound … does not lead us into any kind of linguistic relativism" (Gadamer, 1989a: 156). There is "no captivity within a language", as evidenced by the process of learning a language other than our own (157). Indeed, Gadamer holds that the misplaced concern about being "stuck" in a language, issues from a fundamental misunderstanding about how linguistic traditions are continually re-articulated and about the centrality of inter-linguistic communication to hermeneutics. Through its analysis of translation, conversation, play and what he calls the "fusion of horizons", hermeneutics provides an account of how linguistic innovation is possible and how communication across linguistic traditions makes it possible to obtain shared understandings between different perspectives. Hermeneutics also presupposes a shared background of understandings, which Gadamer characterises as "solidarity", which makes communication and understanding possible. While Habermas looks to provide an account of the extra-linguistic preconditions for communication in quasi-transcendental terms, drawing on theoretical and empirical research in the natural and social sciences (especially linguistics), Gadamer implies that solidarity is a fundamental aspect of the hermeneutical perspective that does not stand in need of (quasi-)empirical support or

elucidation. Thus he contends that it is only in relation to the "measuring stick of an absolute knowledge" – i.e. a knowledge that we can never obtain – that the linguistic character of human understanding appears to imply a "threatening relativism" (Gadamer, 1989b: 283).

How does Gadamer respond to the charge of linguistic idealism? As I have alluded to above, Gadamer says that the hermeneutic insistence on the linguistic character of human understanding does not imply that there is nothing outside of language, nor deny the role of extra-linguistic phenomena which shape our linguistic traditions. He freely admits that "no one will deny that the practical application of modern science profoundly alters our world, and with it our language" (287). However, he does contest the suggestion that we can make claims about these extra-linguistic phenomena which are themselves non-hermeneutical or extra-hermeneutical. Thus while he admits of Habermas's work on the social sciences that "one cannot deny that this socio-theoretical conception has its logic" (Gadamer, 1985: 283), at the same time he rejects Habermas's claim to a privileged extra-hermeneutical insight, arguing that "in this game nobody is above and before all the others" (Gadamer, 1977: 32). In this sense he regards Habermas's "meta-hermeneutical theory of communicative competence" which claims to be able to "get behind language" as a kind of "false ontological self-understanding" or "hermeneutically false consciousness" (Gadamer, 1989b: 287; 1977: 42).

For this reason, Gadamer suggests that "Habermas's concept of reflection and bringing to consciousness seems heavily burdened by its own dogmatism" (Gadamer, 1985: 286). According to Gadamer, Habermas's critical theory risks being deeply uncritical and unreflective about its own status – overlooking its contingent

development and attributing to it a special epistemic priority, rather than putting it on a par with other claims, arguments and texts in the hermeneutical universe. Picking up on claims about deformed or pathological rationality in critical theory, Gadamer says that there is a danger that the doctor/patient metaphor may carry authoritarian tendencies – such that critical theorists have privileged scientific insight into social reality in a way which is exempt to hermeneutical scrutiny and deliberation. It is precisely the totalisation of an allegedly extra-hermeneutical scientific mode of understanding that Gadamer sets out to critique in his *Truth and Method*, as well as to provide an alternative hermeneutical conception of truth and understanding, and to open up space for other non-instrumental modes of rationality and reflection. Gadamer hopes that Habermas may absorb more of the dialogical and historical self-reflexivity that he advances in his programme for a universal hermeneutics.

For Gadamer, Habermas's universal frameworks, systems, schemes and categorisations of society (including extra-linguistic phenomena) risk misleadingly presenting themselves as extra-hermeneutical, rather than as historically contingent articulations which draw on a distinctly occidental theoretical heritage. In short, Gadamer warns Habermas against attempting to place his philosophical contributions outside the realm of hermeneutical deliberation in a way which aligns them with epistemically privileged scientific methodology rather than with the humanistic and hermeneutical inquiry for truth (as paradigmatically exemplified in aesthetic experience). Gadamer emphasises the importance of social "solidarity" that forms the background of shared understandings which makes collective inquiry possible. Investigating the conditions of possibility of communicative action – as per Habermas's

project – should itself be considered part of "the conversation that we are", rather than a scientific project set apart from it. In this vein he writes:

> I am of the opinion that with all our technical and scientific progress we still have not learned well enough how to live with each other and with our own progress. I would like to close with the following remark: What I have tried to make clear to you today is that hermeneutics as philosophy is not some kind of methodological dispute with other sciences, epistemologies, or such things. No, hermeneutics asserts something nobody today can deny: we occupy a moment in history in which we must strenuously use the full powers of our *reason*, and not just keep doing science only. (Gadamer, 2007: 120)

Two Kinds of Universality, Two Kinds of Modesty

Gadamer and Habermas exemplify two philosophical traditions – hermeneutics and critical theory – which were both deeply influenced by ideas associated with the German "linguistic turn" of the eighteenth century. Both draw on Hamann and Herder's linguistic metacritique of Kant's transcendental analysis of human reason – including the latter's insistence on a connection between capacities for reason and our experience of a world. Both remain committed to age-old philosophical vision of establishing a *universal* basis for linguistically articulated human reasoning capacities. However, there are significant differences between their respective suggestions about how this universal basis can be obtained – leading to debates between Gadamer's universal hermeneutics on the one hand, and what will later become Habermas's universal pragmatics on the other hand. Gadamer's hermeneutics draws on Heidegger's "appropriational" conception of language – focusing on how language articulates the shape of the worlds that we experience. We may reconfigure language by being attentive to its affordances and its attunement to the environments of our experience, as exemplified in poetry,

conversation and play. Habermas is much more concerned with the role of reason in the organisation of social and political life. He takes as his point of departure the failure of universal reason to facilitate universal emancipation (as pursued by Leibniz and others in chapter two) – and thus considers it a priority to diagnose the "pathologies" of reason which not only inhibit social progress, but which have also facilitated catastrophes such as the holocaust. This entails looking beyond linguistic traditions, narrowly conceived, and towards their broader extra-linguistic social, cultural and political contexts. While both thinkers are influenced by the encounters between Kant, Hamann and Herder, for present purposes I would comment that Habermas's quasi-transcendental analysis of universal communicative capacities might be considered in terms of a reformulation of Kant's transcendental analysis of pure reason, and Gadamer's insistence on the linguistic character of human understanding might be fruitfully compared with Hamann and Herder's linguistic metacritique of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*.

    While there are significant differences between their approaches to establishing a universal basis for linguistically mediated human reason, are these two views ultimately irreconcilable? Need we follow either one or the other, or might we borrow from both - learning both from the Gadamerian conception of hermeneutical conversation as well as the Habermasian vision of being able to provide an account of universally shared communicative capacities with reference to their extra-linguistic conditions of possibility? Might we draw on both of their arguments to arrive at a perspective that would represent – as Habermas puts it – a "Kant enlightened, rather than rejected, by Hamann" (6)? Here I follow commentators such as Richard E. Palmer, who emphasises their possible "commonality" and "complementarity" (Palmer, 2000), rather than their irreconcilability. I will proceed with an account of their differences with respect to the

framework discussed towards the end of chapter six in order to explore the broader philosophical implications of their views – as well as to discuss which aspects of these views could be revised in order to enable a *rapprochement* between their respective positions.

Both Gadamer and Habermas agree that a substantive part of both the *structure* and *content* of human reason derives from particular linguistic traditions. Both thus recognise that the particular kinds of linguistically articulated reasoning processes – what Hacking calls "styles of reasoning" – are likely to exhibit some degree of variance from domain to domain: legal debates may thus rely on different sets of argumentative resources to those in high energy physics or cultural criticism, economics or theology. Likewise – there may be different kinds of reasoning processes articulated in the possible constructions of different natural languages. We can call this claim, (G0):

> (G0) A substantive part of both the structure and content of human reason derives from particular linguistic traditions.

Both Gadamer and Habermas wish to give these heterogeneous genres of reasoning a common basis. Gadamer does this through his particular philosophical conceptions such as "solidarity", "play" and "fusion of horizons" – through which he defends his claims that:

> (G1) Hermeneutics applies to human understanding in all settings;
>
> (G2) All communication presupposes a common basis of shared understandings;
>
> (G3) There is always the possibility of translation and communication between different linguistic traditions.

In his debates with Gadamer, Habermas expresses agreement with each of these claims (G1), (G2) and (G3) – which represents a substantive "common ground" between the two thinkers. What he doubts is that hermeneutics is able to provide an adequate account of universal communicative capacities – and in particular their extra-linguistic conditions of possibility. Thus Habermas proposes that:

(H1) Hermeneutics is not able to provide an adequate account of the extra-linguistic conditions that underpin human communicative capacities;

(H2) Other social scientific approaches and disciplines (e.g. linguistics, psychology) are able to contribute to an account of the extra-linguistic conditions that underpin human communicative capacities.

While Habermas affirms theses (G1), (G2) and (G3), he fears that they cannot be adequately substantiated by hermeneutics alone. Hence he proposes that (H2) might provide a quasi-empirical support for (G2) and (G3). However, because of his commitment to (G1), Gadamer is not convinced by Habermas's emphasis on (H2) if read as a kind of meta-hermeneutical or extra-hermeneutical proposition. This point becomes major a source of contention between the two thinkers. While Gadamer affirms the hermeneutical status of theses (G1) to (G3), it looks like Habermas is indeed interested in an extra-hermeneutical support due to his claim in (H1). This aspect of the dispute hinges on whether the universal capacities for communication are considered to have a hermeneutical or extra-hermeneutical basis.

There is a further metaphilosophical question about what "providing a basis" means in the context of Gadamer and Habermas's debates. Do (G2) and (G3) require philosophical justification, scientific explanation, or rhetorical argumentation to

persuade us that they are the case? Whereas Gadamer suggests the hermeneutical and conversational character of his discussion about the universality of hermeneutics, Habermas's interest in (H2) looks beyond hermeneutics towards empirical-analytic and normative-analytic research in the social sciences. While Habermas would likely agree that his discussions of (H2) indeed have a hermeneutical dimension, as per Gadamer's (G1), he would also likely maintain that hermeneutics cannot provide an exhaustive treatment of the substantive social scientific claims about the extra-linguistic conditions of possibility of communicative capacities. There is indeed a hermeneutical dimension to scientific research, but hermeneutics cannot exhaust the ways in which science engages with the world in order to undertake empirical-analytic or normative-analytic accounts of phenomena.

Gadamer admits that his vision of hermeneutics is heavily skewed by his own philological training and background, but argues that this does not limit the relevance of the hermeneutic perspective in other domains. One question that it will be crucial to resolve in order to advance this claim to universality, is the extent to which hermeneutics can defend its value in relation to the development of scientific and technological knowledge, including the type of knowledge that Habermas associates with (H2). Though a more detailed discussion of this point in relation to debates in the history and philosophy of science is beyond the scope of this thesis, in the present context I think the plausibility of such a claim would partly depend on the conception of language being advanced. If we adopt a "narrow expressivist" conception of language that limits it to natural language, then this may limit the plausibility of hermeneutics in relation to the practices and institutions of knowledge production which depend on not just linguistically articulated theory formation and interpretative processes, but also

different ways of seeing and ways of knowing associated with – for example – imaging equipment, network analysis, graphical conventions, artificial languages, technical standards, computer software and so on. A "broad expressivist" conception of language which included not only natural language but other forms of "meaningful media" would be better equipped to account for the way in which scientific knowledge emerges through the interplay of people, concepts, theories, equipment and the phenomena under examination. Further conceptual resources in support of hermeneutical accounts of scientific and technological knowledge production might be found in Heidegger and Gadamer's accounts of linguistic innovation as a kind of *co-articulation* and Hamann and Herder's conception of the mutually constitutive relationship between language and experience.

Revisiting Hacking's use of Goodman's vocabulary of "world-versions" to discuss the "HHH" conceptions of language, we might also consider the question of what it means to "provide a basis" in terms of whether claims such as (G2) and (G3) are considered to be "version-bound" or "version-neutral" in relation to linguistic traditions. Gadamer's claim for hermeneutic universality seems to be a version-neutral claim, yet he also freely admits the hermeneutic (as opposed to extra-hermeneutic or meta-hermeneutic) character of his arguments. Might Gadamer's claim for the universality of hermeneutics thus be construed as self-refuting? If his claims are just another part of the hermeneutic conversation, can they also be considered to "provide a basis" for the possibility of this conversation? While Gadamer is unambiguous and uncompromising in his insistence on the hermeneutic claim to universality and with regards to (G2) and (G3), he must ultimately accept that these claims are subject to the same degree of provisionality as other claims as part of the "conversation that we are", as opposed to

the "absolute knowledge" that eludes mortal, finite beings. The possibility of being wrong is fundamental part of the philosophical outlook of Gadamer's hermeneutics – which something he shares with others thinkers in this thesis including Heidegger (at least in principle) and Hamann. Hence (G1) type claims also apply to themselves. In this sense Gadamer's hermeneutics also insists upon a certain kind of modesty and fallibility for all claims in all linguistic traditions – including its own.

Gadamer rejects the notion that this modesty leads to a kind of indefensible relativism. He argues that the implications of his modesty only appear intimidating in relation to an implausible absolute conception of knowledge derived from a misunderstanding of truth and method in the natural sciences. He argues that it is this very conception of absolute knowledge which leads Habermas to pursue (H2). While Gadamer sees his work on hermeneutics as contributing to a broader conversation in the pursuit of a better understanding of our situation – which entails an examination of our relation to linguistic tradition – he does not present this as a kind of scientific knowledge claim that would guarantee the possibility of universal communicative capacities. His claim is necessarily modest due to the provisionality of all historically situated, linguistically articulated knowledge claims, but that does not mean that he is unable to argue for the context-transcendent relevance or universal applicability of his conception of hermeneutics.

As Maeve Cooke argues, Habermas's universal pragmatics is also "self-consciously modest" in a different way (Cooke, 1994: 166). As noted above, Habermas broadly affirms claim (G0) – that a substantive part of both the structure and content of human reason derives from particular linguistic traditions. His primary concern with his

universal pragmatics is to provide a quasi-transcendental rational reconstruction of (H2) – engaging with empirical research where possible, and having philosophical arguments as a "stand-in" or "placeholder" for empirical-analytic research where necessary. The purpose of (H2) is to provide a sound basis for (G2) and (G3). While the modesty of Gadamer's hermeneutics means that he restricts himself to a form of philosophical dialogue or "questioning" in the tradition of Heidegger's existential analytic, Habermas is more concerned to provide a more substantive footing to enable reflection on possible distortions in our linguistic traditions to render them suitable for advancing a critical theory of society. However, while Gadamer considers his work as a contribution to a more substantive conversation about the character of rationality, Habermas deliberately imposes strict limits on his reconstructive task which is primarily intended to serve as a minimal standard to provide support for claims such as (G2) and (G3) as conditions of possibility for all conversation and communicative action. As Cooke writes of Habermas's project:

> It acknowledges that it has little to say about the cognitive content of judgements and norms, that it does not provide a complete account of human experience and action, and that it is not a sufficient condition for human well-being. (166)

If Gadamer's modesty lies in his recognition of the provisionality of his hermeneutics as part of a broader conversation within a linguistic tradition, as per (G1); Habermas's modesty lies in his recognition that while his rational reconstruction of the conditions of communicative competence is universally applicable, it also tells us very little about the structure and contents of human reason, as per (G0). In this sense while Gadamer can be considered to advocate a Hamannian modesty in his cognisance of the limits of his linguistically articulated claims about language, Habermas can be considered to

advocate a Kantian modesty in the pursuit of a universal but very minimal set of conditions of possibility of the communicative capacities which enable more substantive practices and institutions of linguistically articulated reason.

In conclusion, the debates between Gadamer and Habermas make a significant contribution to advancing a philosophical analysis of the issues that arise from Hamann and Herder's linguistic metacritique of Kant's transcendental analysis of reason. What are we to make of their two different visions of universality with their two different attendant forms of modesty? As discussed above, there is substantive agreement between the two thinkers with regards to theses (G0), (G1), (G2) and (G3) – which serve as the basis for claims of "commonality" or "complementarity" between their respective views. In my view (H1) and (H2) represent significant – though not insurmountable – challenges to philosophical hermeneutics. (H1) calls for a more developed account of the possibility of hermeneutical reflection on the extra-linguistic conditions which make hermeneutical experience possible. (H2) is a challenge to go further in developing the insights of *Truth and Method* in relation to reasoning processes, practices and institutions in the natural and social sciences which would push it beyond Gadamer's core focus on paradigmatic cases of interpretation in dialogue and cultural criticism. Gadamer's account of truth and interpretation in relation to humanistic inquiry goes some way to addressing questions about the adjudication between the competing claims of different world-versions that were raised towards the end of chapter six. However, as formulated, Gadamer's work has much less to say about interpretation and knowledge claims in the natural and social sciences.

As mentioned above, a philosophical hermeneutics which holds a "narrow expressivist" conception of language will struggle to provide an account of these processes. A hermeneutics incorporating a "broad expressivist" conception of language might fare better in addressing (H1) and (H2). To illustrate this point, we might consider the role that digital platforms and software algorithms play in mediating communicative action in a wide variety of settings. These may introduce "media effects" which shape the scope and meaning of deliberation through online channels – from filter bubbles and personalisation features, to the character limits and classificatory practices which such media afford. To some extent these media can participate in shaping the "styles of reasoning" – such as the annotation of genetic sequences in biomedical research, to the way in which evidence of human rights violations is organised and classified in a court of law. A philosophical hermeneutics with a narrow expressivist conception of language might consider these mediating infrastructures beyond its remit. A hermeneutics with a broad expressivist conception of language could look to account for how these media participate in the articulation of different "styles of reasoning", thus engaging with the issues that Habermas raises in (H1) and (H2).

Rather than picking one side or the other, I would argue that there is much to be gained by drawing on insights from both Gadamer and Habermas's contributions to the debate. On the one hand – as Habermas points out – the hermeneutical account of rationality would stand to benefit from more substantive reflection on its extra-linguistic conditions of possibility and the scientific and technical "styles of reasoning" against which Gadamer's *Truth and Method* is reacting. On the other hand – as Gadamer points out – Habermas's account of rationality could benefit from further reflection on its own hermeneutical status, and its performative contribution in relation to its stated objective

of encouraging more substantive engagement between different forms of communicative action. Here we might reflect upon the role of philosophy in "providing a basis" for communicative action by elucidating and underwriting the possibility of (G2) and (G3), as compared to Habermas's vision of the role of philosophy as "interpreter" between different styles of reasoning, which would require a more substantive engagement with the actually existing and historical forms of rationality in different domains as per (G0). In this regard philosophers might pay heed to the emphasis that hermeneutics places on *participating* in intra-linguistic and inter-linguistic communicative action, as opposed to accounting for its extra-linguistic conditions of possibility. This would entail a shift from uncovering a minimal common accord which makes communication possible, to contributing to the composition of a more substantive common accord within and across different domains and styles of reasoning, which has the potential to make a more significant contribution to human emancipation.

Conclusion

"The eyes of the detranscendentalized reason have gradually opened for what it also can learn about itself from the world." (Habermas, 2015)

In the preceding chapters I have examined a constellation of ideas about reason, language and experience in German philosophy – focusing on the legacy of Hamann and Herder's linguistic metacritiques of Kant's transcendental analysis of reason. Through this examination I have sought to highlight how different thinkers have sought to develop a conception of language as a socially enacted, historically situated fabric of thought. In this concluding chapter I shall discuss the broader philosophical implications of these ideas – with a particular focus on the possibility of reconciling insights from Hamann and Herder's linguistic metacritique with a reformulated vision of the universality of reason that stands in the service of human emancipation.

To briefly recap the trajectory that I have taken in my thesis: I took Hamann's 1759 *Socratic Memorabilia* as a starting point. This was an open letter to Kant and Berens in which Hamann critiques the philosophical project of the abstraction, purification and the mechanisation of reason (chapter one). Hamann enlists the figure of Socrates in order to oppose the over-zealous abstraction of reason from the contexts in which it is used and performed: including from language, from "tradition" (broadly conceived) and from our everyday experience. In order to put Hamann's position into context and to better understand what he was reacting against, from here I took a step back to briefly survey the development of a particular form of "pure reason" in German philosophy –

in particular looking at Leibniz and Wolff's speculative attempts to initiate a calculus of pure thought (chapter two). Next I looked in more detail at Hamann, Herder and Kant's respective reactions to the purification of reason and began to outline some of the key features of Hamann and Herder's conception of linguistically constituted rationality, as opposed to the "thin" conceptions of rationality advanced by those inspired by the formal calculi of Leibniz and Wolff (chapter three). The next chapter revisited the more familiar story of the linguistic turn in analytic philosophy, focusing on the genesis and reception of the crucial phases of Wittgenstein's work (chapter four).

Returning to the eighteenth century, I then contrasted the analytic linguistic turn with the earlier linguistic turn in German philosophy, looking at the potential implications of redistributing reason from the narrow logico-mathematical ideals of rationalistic philosophers to include a much wider variety of "meaningful media" through which reason is constituted in society (chapter five). The next chapter looked at how this "thicker" vision of rationality was taken up and reworked from the eighteenth and into the nineteenth century by the German Romantics and Nietzsche, who articulated an alternative constellation of ideals and imaginaries for reason in philosophy – advancing what they considered to be a culturally richer, more reflexive and transdisciplinary picture of the fabric of thought (chapter six). In the last chapter, I looked at how this "thick" picture of linguistically mediated reason was taken up in the hermeneutical tradition of Gadamer and Heidegger – focusing on their "appropriational" view of linguistic tradition (chapter seven). Finally, I surveyed debates between Gadamer and Habermas, looking at Habermas's critique of the hermeneutic claim to universality, Gadamer's counter-arguments and their respective conceptions of the common accord

which provides the conditions of possibility for linguistically articulated rationality (chapter eight).

How can this constellation of views inform a more compelling philosophical account of the relationship between reason, language and experience? In the preceding chapters I have discussed how different thinkers have developed a picture of language as that which gives form to both reason and experience. This commences with Kant's transcendental account of the structure of reason and experience, and culminates with Gadamer's hermeneutical conception of reason and experience which is informed by the legacy of Hamann and Herder's linguistic metacritique of Kant. The debates between Gadamer and Habermas that were examined in the previous chapter give rise to the following question: Is it possible to reconcile a context-sensitive pluralist conception of the many registers, practices and institutions of linguistically constituted rationality (as emphasised by Hamann and Herder's linguistic metacritique as well as Gadamer's hermeneutics) with the progressive ambitions of a context-transcendent conception of reason (as Kant and Habermas aspire towards)? Can such a philosophical conception of language overcome both the Scylla of an implausible cultural relativism and the Charybdis of a spurious ethnocentric universalism?

The crux of my philosophical response to these questions in light of the legacy of the eighteenth century linguistic turn discussed in this thesis is a shift from an emphasis on *philosophical analysis to uncover common accord* which can serve as universally shared "rules of the game", towards an emphasis on *communicative action to compose common accord* between different linguistically constituted domains of rationality. I shall divide the following discussion into two parts. Firstly, I shall provide a brief

philosophical defence of this shift with a focus on the questions of relativism and contextualism that were raised towards the end of chapter six. Secondly, I shall discuss the broader implications of this shift from uncovering to composing in relation to recent debates about philosophical methodology and metaphilosophy.

Philosophical Implications

One of the philosophical implications of the views of reason, language and reason presented in this thesis is a move away from aspirations to uncover and elucidate a *single universal rationality* (as per chapter three) and towards understanding a *plurality of linguistically constituted rationalities*. Does this therefore imply a problematic multiplication of reasoning standards that would undermine attempts to obtain anything more than local consensus around knowledge claims? Does the legacy of the eighteenth century linguistic turn lead to a kind of irrationalism or anti-rationalism (as claimed by Isaiah Berlin)? And if these claims about rationality are to be understood themselves in terms of a particular local "style of reasoning", does this thereby limit their broader applicability, or potentially render them self-refuting?

I would like to argue that a pluralist view of reason (which we might call "poly-rationalism"), does not lead to (i) a confinement of styles of reasoning to certain local contexts, nor does it (ii) undermine the possibility of common, context-transcendent styles of reasoning. Furthermore – following a comment from Gadamer discussed in the previous chapter – I would argue that accusations of "irrationalism" or "anti-rationalism" may be predicated on a belief in a single underlying style of reasoning (or a "uni-rationalism") that would require further empirical support to be defended. As Andrew Bowie comments in relation to Hamann: "the structures and practices involved

in a natural language cannot all be reduced to general rules which we *know* to be valid for all languages" (Bowie, 2003: 50). Philosophical projects to purify reason may be understood to considered to support a kind of uni-rationalism to the extent that they hold that the formal logical languages or metalanguages that they develop offer an expressively adequate and context-transcendent substitute for natural languages. Hamann and Herder's linguistic metacritiques challenged this claim to expressive adequacy and context-transcendent substitutability for natural languages – and may be considered to advance a kind of linguistic poly-rationalism. Heidegger and Gadamer may be consider to advocate a kind of poly-rationalism insofar as they consider reason to be constituted in different linguistic traditions. Habermas too may be considered to advocate a form of poly-rationalism to the extent that he claims that the substantive form and contents of reason are constituted in natural languages – though he believes that this must be attenuated with a quasi-transcendental account of the extra-linguistic conditions which make all reasoning possible.

One way that the poly-rationalist can show that styles of reasoning are not confined to particular local contexts is through the possibility of translation. It is perhaps no coincidence that translation plays such a central role for many of the thinkers in this thesis – from Hamann and Herder's emphasis on the importance of cultural translation to enrich the expressive possibilities of a language, to Gadamer's account of translation in terms of his "fusion of horizons". These thinkers see translation not only as an integral part of processes of intercultural understanding, but also as paradigmatic of processes of intersubjective understanding in general. While Gadamer effectively asserts or assumes that processes of translation are possible as part of his contributions to the philosophical conversation, Habermas's universal pragmatics seeks to elucidate

that which makes translation possible through engaging with research, and by having philosophy act as a "stand-in" or "placeholder" for research which aims to provide a rational reconstruction of the conditions that make translation possible. While it is questionable the extent to which successful translation processes depend on the provision of a philosophical account of what makes translation possible, Habermas's interest in empirical research in this area makes sense in order to shed light on the extent to which our communicative capacities are innate or acquired, which has implications for philosophical accounts of the common ground between different styles of reasoning. However, as Cooke argues, Habermas's universal pragmatics must be construed as an elucidation of the universal conditions of possibility of reason, rather than as a more substantive account of the form of reason (which is given in natural languages). Either way, both Gadamer and Habermas provide the poly-rationalist with conceptual resources for accounting for the possibility of translation, which means that they need not be committed to a plurality of incommensurable, parallel rationalities.

Poly-rationalism does not preclude the possibility of common, context-transcendent styles of reasoning. We can find evidence of this in the many different kinds of social and historical cases of the contingent institutionalisation of common styles of reasoning across different domains, cultures or natural languages – from scientific research protocols, to technical interoperability standards, to accounting procedures to international and transnational legal frameworks. In his *Austerlitz*, W. G. Sebald discusses the significance of the coordination of time between station clocks for the emergence of a globalised modernity. In a similar vein, many aspects of the world that we live in are underpinned by transnational, transcultural, context-transcendent styles of reasoning – from the modes of dealing with time and space which issue from global

conventions such as Coordinated Universal Time (UCT) or the Global Positioning System (GPS); standardised processes for making calculations regarding weight, temperature, energy, electric current and luminous intensity; global procedures and standards for the management of money (e.g. accounting or budgeting); and standardised technical processes related to everything from plumbing to computer software. While many of these different processes have very different attendant styles of reasoning, these different styles have been very widely and effectively institutionalised in ways which provide the conditions of possibility of many aspects of collective life in our current moment.

One crucial difference between the uni-rationalist and the poly-rationalist, is that while the former might see these context-transcendent styles of reasoning as evidence of more fundamental common accord which stands in need of elucidation, the poly-rationalist may more readily recognise the significant amount of social and political work that goes into obtaining de facto consensus around different styles of reasoning across different domains. As Sebald notes, before transnational institutions for the coordination of time people would often synchronise by means of their local station clock. Prior to the institutionalisation of internationally recognised standards for weight, traders would weigh goods at a local weighing house. Prior to the emergence of a conception of "world economy" in the inter-war period and convergence around a set of globally recognised accounting standards after World War II, there could be significant differences in the production of financial reports. Research in the history of the natural and social sciences may also be read in terms of the development of cross-domain consensus around different contingent styles and practices of reasoning – such as probabilistic reasoning (Hacking, 1990), experimental reasoning (Shapin & Schaffer,

2011), and quantitative reasoning in business, government, and social research (Porter, 1996). Many of these accounts suggest that the emergence of these styles of reasoning should be understood in terms of the composition of shared institutions of reason rather than in terms of uncovering latent common ground. For a linguistic poly-rationalism to be plausible, it is worth reiterating the importance of an adequate conception of language in relation to these kinds of examples. While debates about language and translation often focus on natural languages, a broad expressivist conception of language (including meaningful media) combined with the recognition of "language games" which cut across multiple natural languages may offer significant advantages in providing a richer philosophical account of the varieties of context-transcendent styles of reasoning implicated in contemporary life.

Having discussed the possibility of a poly-rationalism which neither must retreat into a plurality of different local reasoning practices, nor precludes the possibility of context-transcendent institutions of reasoning, I will now return to the issues regarding relativism, contextualism and universalism raised towards the end of chapter six – but focusing more specifically on "styles of reasoning", rather than Nietzsche's perspectivism. The six claims that were discussed may thus be reformulated as follows:

(A) Languages provide the conditions of possibility for different styles of reasoning;

(B) We cannot "step outside" of the styles of reasoning engendered in language;

(C) We cannot adjudicate between different styles of reasoning engendered in language;

(D) Any style of reasoning engendered in language is as good as any other;

(E) Different styles of reasoning engendered in language are incommensurable;

(F) Claims can only ever be evaluated in relation to a style of reasoning engendered in language.

Thesis (A) is one of the central tenets of the linguistic poly-rationalism examined in this thesis. Weaker versions of this claim – that language enables different styles of reasoning – are likely to be uncontroversial amongst even the most ardent of anti-relativists. As discussed above, stronger versions suggesting that reason is language-bound will depend on showing the possibility of translation and cross-language, cross-cultural and context-transcendent styles of reasoning in order to avoid the implausible thesis (E) that languages articulate incommensurable styles of reasoning. Thesis (B) can be rejected as formulated, if we can show the possibility of inter-language and intra-language translation between domains, and if we hold (following Hamann, Herder, Heidegger and Gadamer) that our experience of the world is not exhausted by language – and that there is a world outside language which can be considered to participate in its articulation and evolution (as in the paradigmatic case of poetic language).

Thesis (C) can also be rejected as formulated. Deliberation and adjudication regarding different styles of reasoning can be considered to be a substantive part of "the conversation that we are", rather than something that can be agreed prior to or apart from the conversation. For example, in the case of controversies regarding the taxation of multinationals, two accountants can have very different conceptions of the tax payments that are due, not simply due to the "facts" regarding the financial affairs of a corporation (about which there may be substantive agreement), but also due to differences in the interpretive schemes and classificatory structures implicated in different styles of reasoning issuing from different linguistic traditions (or language games) of accounting – including definitions of legal entities and the character of different financial transactions. Such controversies can be considered to demarcate the fault lines between different competing styles of reasoning which play out in

conversations which can be considered in hermeneutical terms. That the two accountants are both in possession of the same universally held communicative capacities which make reasoning possible, does not enable us to establish a substantive common ground that can be considered to expedite the resolution of their dispute. Rather the question of the structure and character of the linguistically constituted rationalities of their respective outlooks may be considered to substantively enter into the conversation – whereupon they may analyse the patterns of agreements and disagreements of the styles of reasoning of the traditions that they have been respectively trained in.

Poly-rationalism does not imply commitment to (D), that any style of reasoning may be considered to be as good as any other. Some styles of reasoning may be considered more germane, more attuned, more effective than others in different settings. Here I think it is worth noting the difference between the commitments of poly-rationalism (the acknowledgement of a plurality of styles of reasoning), and what Hacking calls "anarcho-rationalism", which he defines as "tolerance for other people combined with the discipline of one's own standards of truth and reason". Hacking writes that adherents to this view contend that:

> We cannot reason as to whether alternative systems of reasoning are better or worse than ours, because the propositions to which we reason get their sense only from the method of reasoning employed. The propositions have no existence independent of the ways of reasoning towards them. (Hacking in Hollis & Lukes, 1982: 65)

One of the attractive features of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics is that it recognises that reasoning about alternative systems of reasoning is not something

unobtainable, but something which routinely obtains as part of conversations in different settings. This deliberation does not appeal to metalinguistic conditions of possibility which are external to the conversation. Rather linguistically constituted understanding creates the conditions of possibility for reflection and deliberation about itself. Thus, we come to an understanding of language in language, as Heidegger puts it. Here we might also consider the analytical value of Wittgenstein's shift from examining natural languages *per se* to looking through the lens of a plurality of language games. In this sense we may be considered to have not just a single style of reasoning, but a multiplicity of linguistically styles of reasoning which obtain in different settings – which we can draw upon, switch and translate between, combine and compare in an ongoing process of rearticulating the living linguistic traditions of which we are part.

For many of the thinkers examined in this thesis, it is precisely the thicker expressive repertoire of natural language (as opposed to formalised languages or metalanguages) which enables the dialectical conversation between different perspectives through which the "fusion of horizons" can occur. While formalised metalanguages may aim for the parsimony of a small number of fundamental operators (such as the "and", "or" and "not" of Boolean logic), philosophies of language drawing on the legacy of the eighteenth century linguistic turn often emphasise the advantages of a broader range of communicative capacities – including aesthetic, affective and rhetorical dimensions such as musicality, irony, wit and humour. As emphasised by Romantic readings of the Platonic dialogues, adjudication between different perspectives and different styles of reason is not just a matter of loading the appropriate premises into a correctly calibrated argumentative apparatus, but of the art and diplomacy of moving towards a shared understanding. Languages provide the medium which these processes of mutual

understanding can occur, and the common ground between different outlooks and social worlds. This emphasis on processes of intersubjective understanding between different perspectives provides us with grounds for rejecting type (E) claims that would suggest that there is a default incommensurability between styles of reasoning. While some styles of reasoning can be considered incommensurable (Taylor gives the example of the rules of football and rugby, as picking up the ball is allowed in one game but not the other) – this does not imply that all styles are necessarily so.

Regarding (F), while the poly-rationalist does not attempt to appeal to a single, commonly held and universal set of criteria for evaluating knowledge claims (as might the uni-rationalist), this does not entail that "all there is" is competing styles of reasoning, which may be each considered as good as any other. Here we might return to Goodman's notion of "rightness of rendering". Different styles have different criteria for "rightness". Criteria for rightness in relation to legal judgements are likely to differ significantly from criteria in relation to literary translation or medical diagnoses. But this does not entail the strong relativist claim that we cannot meaningfully talk about the truth of different styles of reasoning or perspectives engendered in a language, nor the strong pragmatist claim that truth is purely a function of consensus. While it might be difficult to fruitfully compare styles of reasoning in completely very different domains or from very different historical or cultural contexts, this does not preclude the possibility of making evaluative judgements between different styles of reasoning per se. Charles Taylor argues against the "in-principle […] impossibility of non-ethnocentric judgements of superiority" by suggesting there can be "valid transcultural judgements of superiority" – such as, for example, the judgement that theories of modern science are superior to those of Renaissance magi with respect to their ability to

understanding and predict the physical world (Taylor in Hollis & Lukes, 1982: 101, -103). This line of thought means that we can avoid the conclusion that we cannot talk of validity or rightness in relation to judgements that obtain across different styles of reasoning. However, as Taylor points out, this does not imply that there is "a single argument proving *global* superiority" across the different possible aspects with respect to which the styles can be judged (103). We can thus envisage judgements between taking place between different rationalities as part of linguistically constituted reasoning processes, rather than by means of a global metalanguage. Taylor suggests the advantages of this thick conception of linguistically constituted rationality:

> But the concept of rationality is richer than this. Rationality involves more than avoiding inconsistency. What more is involved comes out in the different judgements we make when we compare incommensurable cultures and activities. These judgements take us beyond merely formal criteria of rationality, and points us toward the human activities of articulation which give the value of rationality its sense. (105)

By endorsing thesis (A) but rejecting theses (B) to (F), a linguistic poly-rationalism can thus avoid some of the undesirable consequences often associated with relativism. In this regard it may be considered to have some affinities with the pluralism of philosophers such as Maria Baghramian, who adopts the analogy of map-making to unpack the implications of her views (Baghramian, 2004). Thus she suggests that there are many different maps and map-making practices that highlight different features of a terrain for different purposes and contexts; that there is "no single correct way of constructing or drawing a map" and no such thing as an "absolutely correct map"; that maps are always partial; and that "we can distinguish between better and worse maps but only in the context of our interests and projects" (240-242). I would argue that the

picture of language that emerges from the constellation of thinkers examined in this thesis has further advantages in accounting not just for how languages pick out features of the world or convey information, but also for exploring how languages provide the conditions of possibility for reason, experience and social action in a way which means that they can be considered to participate in shaping the very terrain that they also depict.

Metaphilosophical Implications

The picture of language as a social and historical "fabric of thought" that is developed by the thinkers that I have explored in this thesis provides fertile ground for thinking about philosophy as a form of social and cultural praxis. In this section I shall look at how this picture can be brought to bear on recent "metaphilosophical" debates about aims and methods of philosophy.

Recent metaphilosophical debates in the analytic philosophical tradition have focused around two competing models for philosophy: armchair philosophy and experimental philosophy. Timothy Williamson proposes a view of armchair philosophy which centres around thought experiments which depend on no more than "our conceptual or linguistic competence" (cf. Williamson, 2005a, 2005b, 2008: 48). This vision depicts philosophy as a technical task for trained specialists whereby the apparatus of our thought should be refined, clarified and improved through a combination of rigorous argumentation, conceptual precision and thought-experiments to ascertain where lines should be drawn. Indeed, Williamson explicitly rejects the focus on language after the analytic linguistic turn, highlighting recent work in metaphysics

that looks beyond language, as well reinforcing a view of language that emphasises its capacities for designating and communicating about entities outside language. Instead he presents philosophy as a discipline concern with the cultivation of *aprioristic* reasoning, informed by developments in formal semantics. Like Frege and the philosophers of pure reason that I examined in chapter three, Williamson also advocates the creation of "mathematical models of fragments of philosophy" (2008). His view presumes that progress can be made on improving the apparatus of our thought *apart* from the contexts in which this apparatus is put to work in the wide world outside of philosophy. Perhaps we might call to mind the analogy between pure and applied mathematics, such that philosophers make theoretical innovations which can drive breakthroughs when they are applied to "real world" problems. Williamson's work presents philosophy as exemplifying a standard of logic and rigour, inventiveness and intellectual honesty in human reasoning.

According to the conceptions of reason, language and experience examined in the previous chapters, this vision of "armchair philosophy" is inadequate to the task of advancing progress towards a conception of public reason fit for collective life in the twenty first century. This would represent a major backwards step from the insights of Wittgenstein's later works, which urge philosophers to "take a look around" at the way in which language and thought is *instituted* in the world. One of the shortcomings of post-Wittgensteinian analytic philosophy has, as we saw in chapter four, been the failure to take this move seriously enough, remaining committed to an overly conceptual and *aprioristic* picture of language. This residual spirit of a kind of Platonic *apriorism* is perhaps partly what leads philosophers into thinking that philosophy can be conducted by "linguistically competent" speakers, set back from the actually and historically

existing institutions of language – such that philosophical analyses of reason and concepts can be undertaken without any corresponding regard for how any of these conceptions are actually instituted in and entangled with the world. In other words: it is perhaps a sublimated belief in enduring, quasi-autonomous conceptual and argumentative forms inherent within language that creates the conditions of apparent plausibility for an analytic philosophical project which strives to study concepts apart from their circumstances and reason apart from actual reasoning practices.

The philosophical tradition informed by the German linguistic turn contains a number of insights and moves which can be used as a corrective to this. For a start, following Ian Hacking, we can locate within this tradition the seeds of a conception of the *publicity* of language: as a shared fabric of meanings which are enacted and institutionalised in society, as opposed to conceptions which focus on its use as a representational tool to communicate individual experiences. Following such a move, we may shift our emphasis from specialist interventions to understand and recalibrate the conceptual affordances of language towards engaging with language "in action" in society and in history, and towards the circumstances and practices which make language meaningful. This entails broadening the horizons of philosophy to scrutinise not just the conceptual material (narrowly conceived) of linguistically constituted reason, but to have a more sustained engagement with its actually existing and historically contingent articulations – whether in science, law, politics, economics, art or everyday life (as recently argued in Taylor, 2016). We may quickly run up against the limits of armchair philosophy if we want to understand the genres of reasoning in relation to, for example, DNA sequencing, high frequency trading or legal evidence. By shifting the focus away from "thinking, without any special interaction with the world

beyond the chair" (Williamson, 2008: 1), and towards an understanding of reason "in action" both historically and in the present, we can thereby open up philosophy to new forms of evidence and understanding, whether in terms of specialised linguistic institutions or "meaningful media" and equipment that is implicated in the organisation of our thought and practices (whether measuring instruments, calculating devices, algorithms, or digital platforms).

One recent response to the perceived inadequacies of "armchair philosophy" has been a turn towards philosophical experimentation, which takes inspiration from a certain conception of scientific method. Proponents of "experimental philosophy" (or "x-phi") have advocated the use of methods from the social sciences in order to empirically study moral beliefs and practices, for example. They have explicitly contrasted this with armchair philosophy – including through tongue-in-cheek images and videos of burning armchairs. However, it is arguable that some of the advocates of experimental philosophy appear to remain committed to the ends of armchair philosophy, and take to take issue mainly with the means and methods which it uses, namely the armchair philosopher basing their judgements on their own individual analyses and intuitions. Instead a range of techniques – such as surveys – can be used to elicit judgements and intuitions which can broaden the range of views that the philosopher should take into account. In the introduction to one recent volume on the topic, it is argued that experimental philosophy provides "evidence for conceptual analysis" (Machery & O'Neill, 2014: ix). Sometimes this amounts to empirically studying how different people respond to the kinds of "thought experiments" advocated by armchair philosophers, by conducting surveys on questions such as "In Universe A, is it possible for a person to be fully morally responsible for their actions?" (Weigel,

2009: 232). Another recent book on "philosophical methodology" presents a choice between the armchair and the laboratory as the best model for philosophy (Haug, 2013).

While the impulse of experimental philosophy to go "out into the world" is certainly welcomed, it risks not going far enough away from the armchair – deriving underlying intuitions from the armchair intuitions and reasoning processes of broader populations, rather than just the lone philosopher. At times the philosophical choice between the armchair and the laboratory sounds close to pre-Kantian disputes between rationalism and empiricism. Indeed, this is Christopher Norris's contention when he suggests that the debate between armchair and experimental philosophy is a "rerun of various old debates" between rationalism and empiricism (Norris, 2013: 99). Here again we may benefit from following Kant's linguistic metacritics Hamann and Herder, who attempt to reconfigure his phenomenological move away from a conception of experience as evidence (as per the empiricism of the natural sciences) towards a reappraisal of the conditions of possibility of experiencing the world as a world – replacing his aspiration to purify reason and the fundamental categories of thought with the study the role of language as a collective fabric of meanings which organises our experience of our environments. Taking inspiration from this outlook, we need not reject outright either the conceptual formalism exemplified by mathematics and logical philosophy nor the narrow empiricism of scientific experimentation. Rather, we can seek a more holistic appreciation of the conditions of possibility and plausibility of these ways of knowing, and to locate them within a broader ecology of ways of engaging with the world. Following Hamann and Herder we can happily reject the *maximalist pursuit* of the purification of reason and the decontextualisation of experience, as well as obtaining a better understanding of where these ideals come from by tracing their genesis from our

"ordinary" linguistic practices. As we have seen above (in chapter five) this is in keeping with the broadly historical and empirical character of the German enlightenment spirit associated with the Berlin Academy in the eighteenth century. The conception of language that I have examined in this thesis can inform philosophical reflection about reason, language and experience in a way which overcomes both armchair philosophy's narrow conception of reason and experimental philosophy's narrow conception of experience.

Many elements can be drawn from my account of its legacy beyond the eighteenth century. Many of the thinkers examined in this thesis propose that philosophers should become sensitive to a much broader range of registers of reason and experience – not just looking at concepts and arguments, but also – for example – the expressive registers and world-projecting capacities of our linguistically mediated reason. They argue that philosophers should aspire to become attuned not only with the multiple languages which organise experience of the world, but also with what Wittgenstein characterises as the manifold regions and passageways of the city called language – how language is actually instituted in different "forms of life". The eighteenth century linguistic turn precipitates a shift from a philosophical interest in purifying a single universal reason (modelled on mathematical calculation and scientific investigation) towards becoming attentive to a multiplicity of linguistically mediated rationalities. In the remainder of this chapter I shall look at how the arguments and ideas that I have examined in this thesis can inform philosophical engagements with historical and the social scientific research in order to develop a more compelling, detranscendentalised account of reason, language and experience in different settings – whilst also retaining an aspiration for universality through communicative acts of translation rather than purification.

While thought experiments and fictional historical accounts were staples of the Wittgensteinian philosophical programme, the metacritical tradition attributes much greater importance to the actually existing social and historical circumstances of the fabric of our thought. It advocates going beyond untangling "timeless" philosophical puzzles, and towards more compelling philosophical reflection upon the concrete communicative practices of human beings in different settings – from workplaces to law courts, urban spaces to social relations. For example, rather than using thought experiments in order to obtain analytical clarity about the definition of art, the meaning of justice or the problem of induction, the metacritical tradition suggests that philosophers should become more attentive to the actual and historical forms of reasoning, language and experience which shape cultural life, political institutions or scientific research. Thus Gadamer and Heidegger suggest philosophers should undertake hermeneutical enquiries into the formative traditions through which we know the world – that in our experience which we inherit, which originates beyond us, which we enact and which constitutes our horizons. Habermas and other thinkers associated with the Frankfurt School advance a programme for the "detranscendentalisation" of public reason by giving an account of the development or dynamics of its actually existing practices, instruments and institutions – as well as normatively intervening to reshape these in the service of continuing the pursuit of the universal ideals of enlightenment modernity, albeit in significantly modified form.

As we saw in Habermas's work in the previous chapter, by cultivating a more substantive relationship with the social sciences philosophers can draw on a richer conception of the actually existing institutions of rationality. This can act as a

complement (and potential corrective) to historical research – to avoid mistaking the genesis of communicative infrastructures with their operations in the present. What do philosophical engagements with social science research look like in practice, with respect to the main concerns of this thesis? One model may be found in Habermas's analysis of "public reason" with reference to a detranscendentalised account of its actual "publics", which is anticipated in Hamann and Herder's shift of emphasis from a universal rationality addressing a single imaginary global public to the many fabrics of thought enacted by different historically and socially specific linguistic communities.

Such a move need not entail a regression to a chauvinistic nationalism (which Herder is often accused of), as this kind of analysis of linguistically mediated rationality is entirely compatible with the ideals of a progressive cosmopolitanism – albeit one which emphasises the *composition* of a common world through processes of translation, rather than uncovering latent commonalities in an already existing global communicative infrastructure. As discussed above we can contrast two different conceptions of universality: one which aspires to *discover* or *distil* a conceptual apparatus of pure reason which is universally applicable, invariant of context and culture; and one which can only hope to *compose* shared understanding through communicative acts of translation and conversation to build commonalities between different socially and historically specific fabrics of thought. Habermas's political philosophy provides one picture of what this shift – from thinking about universality in terms of purification, to thinking of it in terms of communicative acts of translation – might mean in practice. His work emphasises both strengthening transnational institutions (upwards towards global institutions), whilst also ensuring that these institutions are sufficiently well attuned, responsive and accountable to the interests and concerns of particular national

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and subnational publics through the requisite legal and democratic mechanisms (hence his interest in democratic deficits, legitimation and constitutional theory). These moves prefigure a much more recent shift from "*the* public" to "publics" (cf. Calhoun, 1993; Warner, 2005). Recent developments in the social sciences also contribute to this project to obtain a richer, detranscendentalised account of public reason in philosophy, complementing Habermas's historical narrative of the emergence of the bourgeois public sphere by looking at the actually existing institutions of linguistically mediated reason in different settings – from law courts to scientific laboratories to central banks.

Research in the field of Science and Technology Studies (STS) can serve to broaden philosophical imagination about how linguistically mediated reason is articulated through institutions and practices in different areas of life. STS developed from an interest in accounting for scientific and technological innovation, looking at the production of scientific knowledge as a kind of "distributed accomplishment" (including scientific equipment, standards, administrative processes and a wider range of meaningful media) as opposed to accounts which focus on the pioneering discoveries of a handful of innovators. Taking this move seriously means that we would have to multiply the range of phenomena considered relevant to provide an account of scientific and technical rationality, beyond traditional philosophical models of deduction and inference. Research in STS has challenged classical conceptions of scientific reasoning which (as we saw in chapters two and four) have been taken as paradigmatic in philosophy. In particular, social studies of science have shown that scientific research rarely conforms to the inferential models or formalised processes that have been invoked to explain breakthroughs and discoveries *post hoc* – instead depending on contingent social alliances, practices, cultural traditions and institutions of reasoning.

Bruno Latour's studies of knowledge "in the making" in laboratories, courtrooms, public administrations and engineering teams has culminated in his call for an "anthropology of modernity" – arguing that while attempts to give "a history of Reason" have focused on "truth and error in a *single* key", what is needed is to become attuned to different forms of reasoning in their different contexts (Latour, 2013: 66). Thus he argues that: "Reason without its networks is like an electric wire without its cable, gas without a pipeline, a telephone conversation without a connection to a telephone company" (66). Rather than discussing reason in the abstract – or "reason without networks" as he calls it – Latour proposes to identify the different "modes of existence" (borrowing Étienne Souriau's phrase) and the "keys" of reason in different areas of life. More sustained empirical engagement with what Daston and Galison describe as the "concrete practices of abstract reason" (Daston & Galison, 2010: 59) and what Hacking calls "styles of reasoning" (Hacking, 2012) in science and technology is particularly important given the paradigmatic role of scientific and technical rationality for many thinkers in the tradition that I have examined – from Heidegger to Gadamer, Horkheimer to Habermas. Especially given the fact that – as Friedel Weinert puts it – there is "serious doubt whether Habermas's view of occidental science is adequate" (Weinert, 1999).

In this thesis I have advocated a broad, thick, expressive conception of language, which is contiguous with and spills over into other forms of "meaningful media". As many commentators have pointed out, we find resources for thinking about the affordances of media – from music to the visual arts to digital media – in the tradition of thinkers that I have examined, from the German Romantics work on music, to

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Benjamin's writings on photography and film. As explored in chapter seven, Heidegger

has also been a major influence on contemporary media theory and philosophy (Peters,

2015; cf. Peters, 1999; Gunkel & Taylor, 2014). Combining Heidegger's analysis of

technology with recent work in STS, media studies and communication studies, John

Durham Peters calls on philosophers to pay greater attention to the media and

infrastructures which underpin our environments and organise our worlds of experience

– from sunsets to search engines, from timekeeping and navigational devices to

architecture and agricultural techniques. Yet, he also maintains that "if there is an ocean

that all humans swim in, it is language", and that language is indispensable for

understanding how human action is organised. Habermas has similarly been held up as

a "founding philosopher" of the media and communication studies, "who examines the

impact of media environments on culture and history, and who offers a media ecological

approach for communication as a liberating activity" (Grosswiler, 2001: 30) and "treats

the development of the media as an integral part in the formation of modern societies"

(Thompson, 1995: 7).

From the linguistic turn in the eighteenth century we find the seeds of a more

compelling account of how language is deeply interwoven into the fabric of social

worlds. In this tradition language is not just a private vehicle for the transparent

representation of mental content for individual thinkers, nor the imperfect raw material

from which a superior formal language for dealing with concepts may be extracted,

distilled and clarified by technical experts in armchairs. For many of the thinkers in my

thesis language may be considered as a public communicative infrastructure which

provides the conditions of possibility for experience of the world as such, and which is

deeply implicated in the organisation of social life, institutions and practices – broadly

conceived. It is this very heterogeneity, this richness of different modes in different "forms of life", which the eighteenth century provides us with resources for not only thinking about, but also contributing to.

Another consequence of the metacritique of pure reason advanced by Hamann and Herder is that there is no "neutral ground" outside language upon which philosophers can stand – whether to construct a formal metalanguage, or to step back and reflect upon our linguistic practices. We must, as Heidegger puts it, come to an understanding of language in language. The linguistically mediated character of philosophical reason means that we are indeed limited to reasoning with and through language, yet it also means that we have the full expressive wealth of language available at our disposal through which to reason. As discussed in the previous section, rather than *discovering* the basis of universal rationality latent in the depths of the grammar of our natural language or *creating* formal metalanguages through which such universal rationality can be obtained, another way to hold onto the enlightenment ideal of universality is through *bridging* between different local genres of rationality through acts of communication and translation. This entails a shift from conceiving of philosophy as a predominantly *analytical*, *descriptive* or *deflationary* enterprise, to also considering its *performative* and *normative* dimensions. This is partly what Hacking is alluding to when he says that the analytical linguistic turn in the Wittgensteinian model has effectively depoliticised philosophical inquiry into the social and political dimensions of language (Hacking, 2002: 136).

The contributions of philosophers are as much a part of the linguistically mediated communicative infrastructures that they reflect on, as literary texts and legal documents.

As I have suggested above, in the tradition of German philosophy after the linguistic turn there is an acute awareness of philosophy as a form of linguistic praxis. Indeed, on the basis of their picture of linguistically mediated reason, philosophy *cannot but* play a performative role, insofar as philosophical texts, arguments and ideas remain part of the linguistic traditions that are transmitted between generations. Indeed, in Gadamer's account, there is always a performative dimension to interpretation: we always make linguistic traditions our own as we inherit them. However, while many of the thinkers in the chapters above agree with this point – there is less consensus about *how* and *how much* philosophers can and should aim to reshape or contributed to the linguistically mediated traditions through which their inquiry is conducted. As we saw in the previous chapter, both Heidegger and Gadamer assert that language in some sense *speaks us*. Their "appropriational" model of shaping is less about an individual subject self-consciously imposing their intentions onto linguistic material, and more about openness to a mutual reshaping of language and the experience of *Dasein*, as exemplified in poetic language.

By contrast, the Frankfurt School tradition of critical theory places a much greater emphasis on critiquing and normatively reshaping our linguistically mediated communicative infrastructure as a means to advancing progress towards a critical theory of society – which in turn lies on the road towards emancipation from the pathologies of late capitalism. Here we may draw on Frankfurt School's conceptions of critical reflexivity and "immanent critique" – from Benjamin's reflections on the genesis of the political thought which he uses in his own work, to Habermas's interest in finding the normative basis for political philosophy in everyday communicative acts. This tradition places an emphasis on critical self-knowledge: aspiring to learn more about the

assumptions and underpinnings of the fabric of thought through which one deliberates. This last point is where Gadamer accuses Habermas of retaining an implausible Enlightenment conception of being liberated from tradition: of the autonomous subject who strives for conscious self-knowledge which enables them to overcome their prejudices and rise above tradition in order to obtain a superior perspective and to reshape the fabric of thought in light of this knowledge. Whereas Habermas talks of overcoming communicative distortions, Gadamer believes it is precisely the aggregation of such distortions (prejudices) which give our traction to our communicative apparatus. As we saw in the previous chapter, Habermas' counters that Gadamer holds an unnecessarily conservative conception of how we are beholden to linguistic tradition, and argues that philosophy should contribute to the task of deriving the normative conditions for undistorted communicative action, which is vital to ensure that the lifeworld has the capacity to resist being subsumed by the twin dangers of unimpeded marketisation and bureaucratisation.

This tension – between on the one hand Heidegger and Gadamer's "appropriational" model of reshaping linguistic tradition, and on the other hand Habermas's interests in obtaining a stronger normative position from which to reshape our communicative infrastructure as well as in obtaining a broader empirical perspective on the concrete institutions of reason – opens up a space for thinking about the role of philosophy as a form of linguistic praxis. If Heidegger and Gadamer call us to be attentive to the way in which we inherit linguistic worlds and how these worlds shape our experience, Habermas focuses attention on the social and political (and not just the cultural or phenomenological) aspects of these linguistic worlds, and how we can aspire to change our communicative practices, rather than feeling beholden to what we inherit.

Heidegger and Gadamer beckon us to be attentive to the qualities and capacities of linguistic material, and to come to an understanding of language in language using its full expressive capacity and range. Habermas urges us not to let go of the enlightenment interest in the emancipatory potential of universal reason, albeit through a universality which must be assembled through processes of translation and acts of communication, rather than acts of philosophical distillation and semantic formalisation.

Where does this tension take us with respect to the question of the performative dimensions of philosophy? One final point I'd emphasise is regarding the types of interventions that philosophers make. Just as thinkers in the preceding chapters urge us not to have too narrow a conception of language, so too we should be wary of overly narrow conceptions of philosophy and what philosophy does. This echoes another recent argument along these lines made by Bruno Latour, who polemically poses the question of whether critique has "run out of steam". He argues that if we adopt an overly narrow focus on critique, we risk becoming like "mechanical toys that endlessly make the same gesture when everything else has changed around them", preparing graduates for "wars that are no longer possible, fighting enemies long gone, conquering territories that no longer exist, leaving them ill-equipped in the face of threats we had not anticipated" rather than adapting and revising their forms of intervention to "new threats, new dangers, new tasks, new targets" (Latour, 2004). Instead he advances the notion of "composition", which "takes up the task of searching for universality but without believing that this universality is already there, waiting to be unveiled and discovered" (Latour, 2010). This accords with Habermas's proposed shift in thinking about universality from semantics to pragmatics: moving away from uncovering

universally shared patterns of meaning and structures of reasoning to enabling communicative acts of translation and interaction.

The constellation of thinkers examined in this thesis offer a very rich set of arguments and ideas about the different forms that philosophy can take, and the different kinds of interventions it can make. Indeed, this is reflected by the fact that very few of the thinkers can be purely and straightforwardly characterised as philosophers – with many of their texts spilling over into cultural analysis, history, philology and theology, with a similarly diverse range of styles, from poetic and aphoristic language, to encyclopaedias and dossiers of quotations. While Plato's allegory of the cave draws attention to a world of forms that lies beyond the physical world, the thinkers in this thesis seek to draw attention to the living language "out there" in the physical world beyond the cave of idealised philosophical forms. Being attentive to manifold contexts of language as a living institution is relevant not just for examining it as an object of study, but also for using it in the context of communicative action in philosophy.

How can this inform visions of philosophy beyond the armchair and the experiment? Just as Hamann draws inspiration from Socrates as a philosopher who thinks in public, in the agora amongst people in different circumstances of life, rather than as a technical expert distilling a formal apparatus for reasoning a world apart from where everyday reasoning actually happens – so we can consider the role that philosophy plays in performatively opening up space for thinking with and between different "forms of life" – informed by an empirical appreciation of current arrangements, as well as a historical sense of how they have come to be the way they are. This vision of philosophy resonates with Rorty's vision of moral progress as "a matter of increasing sensitivity,

increasing responsiveness to the needs of a larger and larger variety of people and things" (Rorty, 1999: 81). It can also draw on Habermas's conception of philosophy as "interpreter" between "everyday communication" and "expert cultures" of rationality which are becoming increasingly "rarefied" and "esoteric" (Habermas, 1990: 1-20). Habermas suggests that this entails developing a stronger relationship between philosophy and the human and social sciences – as exemplified by the cooperation between the philosophy of science and the history of science.

In a recent speech, Habermas contrasts the "thin rational faith" and the "buffered self" of Kant's transcendental philosophy with "the powerful movements of detranscendentalization" precipitated by Hamann, Humboldt, Hegel and Schleiermacher – which opened up "a new continent of history, culture and society" (Habermas, 2015). Habermas reiterates the picture of language that I have explored in the latter chapters of this thesis: that human beings shape the cultural forms which surround them, and are "shaped in turn by those intersubjectively shared symbolic and historical realities of culture and society". He argues that philosophy should be considered a "parasitic undertaking that lives off learning processes in other spheres", in order to provide critical scrutiny of them as a "secondary role of a form of reflection". Despite his advocacy for the transcendentalisation of reason, it is on this very point that Habermas has been widely criticised: for being insufficiently attentive to actually existing social, political, economic and historical conditions – both in relation his earlier work on the public sphere as well as in his more recent work on European democracy (see, e.g. Calhoun, 1993; Dean, 2003; Streeck, 2016). This surely serves to reinforce his call for a stronger and more substantive encounters between philosophical inquiry and other

research approaches which aim to account for the evolving constitution of linguistically mediated forms of human understanding.

While Habermas situates his philosophy within the Kantian tradition of critique (cultivating self-understanding in order to overcome illusions and understand limits) – to what extent should this conception of critique be considered the predominant aim of philosophical inquiry? Here once again we may benefit from returning to Hamann and Herder's metacritique of Kant, and the legacy of this turn to language in German philosophy. Their call for attention to language as a living fabric of thought remains relevant to the task of cultivating a philosophical praxis of thinking *with* and *through* the full expressive range of our linguistically mediated, historically situated and socially constituted capacities for understanding. This stands in contrast to the ideal and natural language branches of the analytic linguistic turn – whose primary interest in language lies in deriving an understanding of the conceptual structures and linguistic "rules of the game" which can assist with clarifying formal inferential reasoning processes or (dis-)solving philosophical problems, as per Kant's proposal that "method precedes all science". The constellation of thinkers examined in this thesis provide a much richer series of engagements which show: how language provides the conditions of possibility for both reason and experience; how language is implicated in articulating social, cultural and political worlds; how innovation is possible within linguistic traditions; the fundamental relationship between languages and specific social and historically situated linguistic communities; and the porous crossing between verbal language and other forms of "meaningful media". As I have discussed in the preceding chapters, these conceptions open up space for philosophers to reflect on and contribute to the public, evolving, linguistically mediated institutions of thought beyond what Hacking

characterises as the depoliticising vaccination of the Wittgensteinian paradigm of

conceptual analysis.

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